

**DEVIN PICKARD**  
**Papa KayJoe's Bar-B-Que - Centerville, TN**

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Location: Papa KayJoe's Bar-B-Que - Lexington, TN  
Interviewer: Rien Fertel for the Southern Foodways Alliance  
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs  
Length: 40 minutes  
Project: Southern Barbecue Trail – Tennessee

**[Begin Devin Pickard-Papa KayJoe's Interview]**

**00:00:00**

**Rien Fertel:** This is Rien Fertel with the Southern Foodways Alliance. It is a Thursday, July 24, 2008 just about 10 o'clock in the morning. I'm here at Papa KayJoe's Bar-B-Que in Centerville, Tennessee, on the Barbecue Trail with Mr. Devin Pickard. I'm going to have him introduce himself and tell us his birth date.

**00:00:25**

**Devin Pickard:** Hey, my name is Devin Pickard; my birth date is August 15, 1969.

**00:00:30**

**RF:** And you are the owner and founder of this barbecue restaurant, as I understand?

**00:00:33**

**DP:** That's right.

**00:00:35**

**RF:** And when did you open it? How long has it been around?

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**DP:** We opened September 2, 2000.

**00:00:43**

**RF:** Okay; and—and we are in Centerville. The City is in Hickman County. Can you tell me a bit about the county?

**00:00:51**

**DP:** Centerville is known as the—it's the County Seat of Hickman County which was for years known as Keg County. Now Keg County simply meant that there were a lot of folks who ran moonshine, made their living doing that and so that's where we got the name Keg County. Centerville, Hickman County is the birth place of Ophelia Cannon. Many people know her as Minnie Pearl. Recently a year or two ago had a—a statute put up of her on the—on the Town Square, so we're sort of for her; Del Reeves was also born and raised here. He—he recently passed away. He was a star on the Grand Ole Opry for years. We—I don't know what else we're known for really; a lot of good folks. A lot of people say that we're part of the buckle of the Bible belt, have a lot of churches—very religious town. I was born and raised here and—and I think it's—it's a great place. We have really good schools. We have a lot of diverse restaurants actually for such a small town; probably not many more than 3,000 folks or so inside the City limits. We have Mexican and fish and barbecue and spaghetti and pizza and this and that, so it's a good place. It's a good place.

**00:02:07**

**RF:** And you were born and raised here. Growing up what barbecue restaurants if any do you remember being in this—in this town?

**00:02:16**

**DP:** We had a couple of small ones that would—seems like barbecue restaurants are—are the most—I know restaurants are the most I guess opened and—and closed or failed businesses there are, but it seems like the barbecue restaurants even more so. We had a couple little mom and pop restaurants, barbecue related—Stone’s Barbecue comes to mind is—is the name of one little place that—that was open for a while. And there’s been some other folks who have really tried it but it’s—it’s been a real hit and miss. I would think—I may be wrong and speaking out of turn, but I think we’re probably had—we’ve—we’ve had the—the best longevity of any barbecue restaurant at least that I can recall here, so what we hope is that when people in Centerville think of barbecue that they think of us ‘cause we are the only if you will barbecue restaurant. I mean there are some other places here that serve barbecue but it’s not their primary objective as it is here.

00:03:14

**RF:** And tell me how you got into the barbecue business. As I understand you—before you opened your own restaurant you—you worked in another barbecue joint.

00:03:26

**DP:** When I was about 15 years-old in high school I played basketball with a fellow who worked at a barbecue restaurant in Dixon, Tennessee which is just not too far outside of Nashville. And he actually was the cook and he cooked it the way that we do here, just in a pit with hickory coals and things like that. And so they needed someone to help him cook barbecue. So he asked me if I wanted to you know do a little work on the weekends or at night and make a little spending money and I was like sure. I didn’t have anything else going on. So 15 years-old began doing that, learned how to pretty much do what we do right now; we—there’s not much

different than the way—than the way we did it in—in Dixon and my brother also worked there as well from about the same age. He also has a barbecue restaurant; it's in Dixon now. Bart's Barbecue is the name of that but—so that's kind of how we—how we got started. And really liked it; kind of seemed to be our little niche and so here we are, some gosh well over 20 years later.

**00:04:37**

**RF:** Well what—what was the name of the restaurant in Dixon?

**00:04:40**

**DP:** Cherry's Barbecue.

**00:04:43**

**RF:** And who was the owner?

**00:04:43**

**DP:** Bob Cherry was his name. Bob Cherry; he—he worked—he also had a—he had a big part in the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders Association. He—he raised and trained walking horses for years and he was the Executive Director of that for—for several years and so he was—he called himself an absentee owner. More or less he left it up to myself and my brother to—to run it and—and so that's—that's kind of where we got our start. And we were both there until about the year—well we were there until 2000 when we opened this.

**00:05:16**

**RF:** Is Cherry still around?

**00:05:18**

**DP:** No, no; actually Witt's Barbecue bought him out so that's—he's there now.

**00:05:22**

**RF:** Okay; what—when you were running Cherry's what was your—were you front of the house, were you doing the cooking?

**00:05:28**

**DP:** Did a little of both. My brother actually did most of the cooking; Bart did. He did most everything out back. I more or less was just the—the Store Manager and—and just handled most—everything inside. So I did everything out front and he did everything out back.

**00:05:41**

**RF:** How far are we west of Nashville on Highway 100?

**00:05:47**

**DP:** We're probably 60 miles from—from Metropolitan Nashville, Davidson County you know maybe 50 I don't know; so it's—it's not—you know an hour's drive.

**00:05:57**

**RF:** So we're close. So I've been doing a lot of research and interviews in Memphis and I—I found that maybe an hour outside of Memphis people still cook a style of barbecue called Memphis Barbecue. Is there a Nashville Barbecue?

**00:06:12**

**DP:** I don't—I don't necessarily think so. I know that folks—in places like Memphis, maybe in the Carolinas, Kansas, Texas—obviously all these people have their different styles of barbecue. I don't—you know I don't think that Nashville necessarily has a style. I think there are several different styles there but I don't think folks are necessarily devoted to one particular kind. I know that our—our style of barbecue is—is more of a—it's hand pulled and—and sort of shredded by hand but it's not chopped with any kind of a cleaver or anything like that. It's just strictly—we cook Boston butts and—and we hand pull that. We do not mix it with any sauce, just a little salt more or less but—but then what I'm getting at is—is the other fellow here in town who—who does barbecue as well, his is more pulled and a little drier than ours, a little—little stringier and—and so everybody kind of has their own different way of doing it, but I don't think that Nashville itself would have a particular—this is Nashville Barbecue type thing.

**00:07:18**

**RF:** Right; so you—you cook Boston butts you said. Why do you cook butts; why do you think it's a good piece of meat compared to shoulders or similar cuts?

**00:07:28**

**DP:** At Cherry's Barbecue we cooked shoulders and shoulders are—are very good. There's no question about that and I know a lot of folks use those. A lot of work in pulling the shoulders; a

lot—several bones, gristle fat, vein—this and that; when I opened here one of my salesmen said well have you thought about trying Boston butts? All I knew was shoulders and I intended on cooking shoulders, but—so he—he brought me down a pack or two of Boston butts. Cooked them and just immediately fell in love with them because a lot less waste; the yield to me is—is certainly is—is far better. Just one bone, just a little bit of fat and you're good to go pretty much; it's just—it's a lot less complicated. I think it's the—the yield again is—is greater. Little easier to handle 'cause they're a little smaller, cook—can cook them—if you're pushed a little you can cook them a little quicker I think. And so it's just a matter of preference and—and to be honest I guess it's just me being lazy; it's just a lot less work but—but to me I can't tell a lot of difference in a shoulder—in shoulder meat as far as the actual taste and in the Boston butt, so—. It works for us.

**00:08:40**

**RF:** Yeah; I want to ask about the cooking process. Do you—and you know starting at the beginning, do you season or salt the butts before you put them on?

**00:08:49**

**DP:** Yeah; all we do is just regular table salt. We—we put the butts, cut side up and season—season them with salt—quite a bit of salt actually and then that's all that we do to them, literally. We don't—we don't have any kind of a dry rub; we don't inject anything in them. Again at the end—the end product is not mixed with any kind of sauce; it's my opinion that if your meat is good you may not necessarily want sauce on it. I think sauce tends to—obviously it somewhat hides the flavor of the meat and so we prefer just to make the sauce our self which it's homemade, but we make that and have it on the table here. But we have a lot of folks who do not

use sauce at all and so really from—from the beginning the process is just a little bit of salt and that's it. And it—again it—it seems to work or has so far.

**00:09:44**

**RF:** And—and how long does the meat cook for?

**00:09:46**

**DP:** We try to cook it 12 hours to 14 if we can. Now again that process can be sped up if you need to but obviously as most people know, the longer you can cook it and the more you can draw it out the—the more tender it'll be, the more moist it'll be, so—so we can get them done in eight hours if we had to. But we generally cook them overnight; usually put them on—we have a—a fellow who works—we call third shift who is our main cook. He will get the meat on around 6 o'clock, 7:00 or so and then we take it off the next morning or I take it off around 6:00 or 7:00. So normally it'll run about 12 hours; we cook it every night. It's fresh every day and we cook pork, we cook brisket, chicken, ribs, turkey which is a big seller and—and all that's just done on—on the pit. We burn hickory wood, shovel the coals under the meat, and that's it. I mean it's not—not—it's not brain surgery.

**00:10:47**

**RF:** So you use 100-percent hickory?

**00:10:50**

**DP:** That's it; we mix—occasionally we'll have somebody that will bring us a little bit of oak or something that might get mixed in with it but predominantly everything we do is hickory. I've

got a buddy who owns a hickory mill. You see the trim around the windows right here; that's— that's hickory and he—his expertise—he cuts hickory poles and uses them for—he makes—he cuts it in a certain way and then ships it up north somewhere where they make furniture out of it. Well he'll get a lot of pieces that he can't use and you'll see them out back in a minute on the trailer and—and he—we get those and it works out well. And then we have some local folks who you know if a tree blows down or if they're trying to clear off some places they'll—they know that we use hickory and a lot of times they will come and we'll buy it from them, but—but my buddy Joey is our predominant supplier.

**00:11:38**

**RF:** How—how do you speed up the process? Is it just a matter of adding more fuel?

**00:11:42**

**DP:** Yes; that's it—fuel being coals. We can cook it at a little hotter temperature. I'll let you know—you can go out back and look in a little bit but there's—I mean there's no knobs, there's no gas lines, there's no eyes, there's no thermometer; there's—there's nothing. It's just coals and a shovel and you do it—you do it long enough and you begin to learn how to fire the meat, how to—how many coals to put under there given what—given how—how fast you're trying to get it done. So you know just if you wanted to cook it quicker again you—you risk it being drier but it's just a matter of adding more coals and—and more frequently rather than letting the—the coal time, you know you may put coals under the meat at—at the beginning of an hour and may not you know fire them again for another two or three hours. The heat outside has a lot to do with that; if it's dead in the middle of winter, obviously it takes for us because our building is not insulated. It's just an old fallen down pit; the one that like you might imagine in my opinion in

the South, and so we have to fire it a lot harder in the wintertime. The summertime like today if it's going to be 90—95 degrees like it has been the last few days the meat cooks a lot quicker, and so it just depends on a lot of different circumstances and—and a lot of different variables.

**00:13:07**

**RF:** Can you describe the pit how it's constructed and laid out?

**00:13:11**

**DP:** It—it—let's see; it's probably—it's concrete block, probably four feet high and then it's just wood studs, metal roof, some screen around it; it's not pretty by no means. Again we've had a few fires, but it's still standing. I expect one morning I'll get here and the thing will just have—have fallen in and—and the smart thing would probably be to obviously have some type of metal—metal trusses so even if it did catch fire it's not going to burn down but it's—it's got the—my wood burner is just outside the door. It's a—it's quarter inch gas pipeline that I got from my uncle who worked for the Gas Company and there have been thousands and thousands of fires built in it, and—and I mean it will withstand a long, long time. So it's just—again in my mind's eye it's what people would think a barbecue pit is supposed to look like. It's not real clean looking on the outside. It's charred. It's burnt and it just looks like something you'd see out back behind a barbecue restaurant, so—.

**00:14:24**

**RF:** And you built it yourself?

**00:14:24**

**DP:** Yeah; myself and my dad actually built that and—. We didn't lay the block; had—had somebody to help do that but outside of that everything else we—we did that—we put it up ourselves and again it's caught fire a few times but that's just part of it.

**00:14:41**

**RF:** Okay; I want to ask about what you serve of course. You know, I think what you're known for, what's most interesting here is—is the sandwich. It's a cornbread sandwich; can you talk about that?

**00:14:56**

**DP:** Yeah; we—we made little cornbread fritters. Some people would call them fritters or hoe cakes; they look like pancakes pretty much, little flapjack looking things and we did that in Dixon at Cherry's but—which was—which was good and we sold a lot of that. But we just more or less cooked them on top of a flat grill. When I came here my grandfather told me that everything is—is—everything is good fried in lard. And so we began coating the—the grill, the griddle fairly thick in—in lard and literally we—we fry these. Not the healthiest thing in the world but they're fabulous; they taste really good and it more or less you fry up two of those. We fry them fresh as ordered and pile barbecue on top of them. Some people you know put slaw on them and this and that, pickles and whatever. We—we serve everything pretty well plain and then if folks want something added on top then we do that. I know there's some places that it comes standard with slaw on it, with pickles—whatever and I found it's a lot easier just to put it on as they need it than to try to take it off if they didn't want it and then you—then you ruin that, so—. That's probably one of our best sellers is the barbecue on cornbread. We—we sell a lot of turkey; I think a lot of folks have become a lot more health conscious and you know being the

greasy spoon that most barbecue places are and I don't claim to be any different, it—it is good to have something of a healthy nature. We have that; we have smoked half chickens. Again we do beef brisket; we pull that. We don't slice it; we pull it just like we do the pork. On Fridays and Saturdays is when we have the chicken halves and—and pork ribs, spare ribs. We do everything is from scratch; turnip greens—pretty—I say everything; most everything is from scratch—turnip greens, white beans, baked beans; potato salad is made in-house; the mayonnaise slaw is made in-house; vinegar slaw is made in-house so everything has our little handprint on it in some way.

**00:17:03**

**RF:** Where did these recipes come from? Did you make them up?

**00:17:08**

**DP:** Again a lot of what we do here was—was brought from Dixon and what we did there and I gained at least a base knowledge of how to do those things. And over the years some of these recipes have evolved, changed a little bit; the sauces have evolved and changed a little bit. So you know I can't take all the credit for all the recipes. I have a—a couple of buddies who—who help me. I also am a full-time Minister, so I'm not here all the time. I'm here most every morning getting things going but as far as actually working during the day—so I've got a couple buddies who help me and have come onboard and one of my partners is usually here—again he—he works the third shift when we're closed with the cook out back and he makes the potato salad. It's his own recipe—from scratch; they do that every night. The baked beans are his own recipe from scratch, so most everything again is—it's—it's fresh; it's done daily and—and I think it's

different than what anybody in Centerville does for sure and—and probably farther out than that, so—.

**00:18:18**

**RF:** The—the cornbread is it a sweet cornbread or not so?

**00:18:22**

**DP:** No; all it—it's cornmeal, it's eggs, and it's buttermilk and that's pretty much it. The lard is where it gets its flavor.

**00:18:31**

**RF:** Is it—is it fried in a mold or just on—?

**00:18:33**

**DP:** No, no; it's just—it's fried on a flat griddle and it—it actually—it will only spread out so far. We try to make it thick enough that as—as you put it on the griddle and it's obviously hot, probably 300—350, they'll start spreading a little bit but they'll eventually stop like a pancake because it—it is so hot; it'll cook. And so we—we flip them and let them get good and brown on both sides and they're—they're good to go.

**00:19:04**

**RF:** And tell me about the sauces. How many sauces do you have?

**00:19:06**

**DP:** We have a mild sauce—these sauces are vinegar based. We have a mild, we have a hot, we—we can do an extra hot although we don't have it; we just make that as people need it, just add a little more pepper. Those are vinegar based. We have a sweet sauce that is more ketchup based and brown sugar based and we have some other—obviously some other ingredients in that. The sweet sauce is—is a—is very good and it's a big seller. The mild and hot regular sauces are somewhat thin; it's not a real thick sauce. It helps to—to permeate the meat rather than just sitting up on top of it. The sweet sauce is a little bit thicker because it has brown sugar in it. And—and it kind of—it's kind of a nice variety. It's kind of a—I wouldn't say it's a spicy sweet by any means. It's—it's just more or less kind of a thick sweet sauce. It's really good on chicken and really good on the ribs; it's good on all of the meat for sure. So that's kind of the varieties and of course we have ketchup and things like that. But that's—hot, mild, and sweet is our main sauces and we make them all from scratch. We don't buy them, so—they're good.

00:20:15

**RF:** All right; and—and tell me about the providence of the name Papa KayJoe's.

00:20:19

**DP:** The land that the restaurant is built on is—is family property. My mom and dad live in the house just above us where he was raised. My grandfather died at 94 year-old in 1999 and after his passing my—my dad and his brothers as—as they were sorting everything out we ended up with—with this property where the restaurant now sits. It was—it was just a wooded lot right here on the highway so we decided well if we're going to try to do our own thing this is the time. So in comes the bulldozers and the laborers and built the building. Trying to think of a name that was somewhat catchy; we called my grandfather Papa, hence the name Papa. At the time we had

two children, Kaylie was our daughter—oldest—and Jordan our son. We called her for short Kay and called him for short Joe, and so came the Papa KayJoe's. Now since then we've had another daughter; her name is Ruby named after my—my grandmother on the other side of the family. We had a Ruby-Q for a while; we tried to fit her in 'cause—so she didn't feel left out. She's just still four and doesn't—she's not old enough to realize she's—she's not in the name, so as she gets older we might have to work her in somewhere but—but anyhow, Papa KayJoe's—my grandfather and our two oldest children.

00:21:45

**RF:** Do your two older children work here or help out?

00:21:45

**DP:** Kaylie is almost 16; she will be in January. She has a lot of extra curricular thing going on; she plays lots of sports—basketball and volleyball which keeps her pretty busy. She has helped some. Our son, Jordan, just turned nine and he does like to put on an apron and walk around and help as he can. They—they like to do it 'til it's not fun anymore and that usually lasts about five minutes and then—and then they're done with it, so—. But we—we come here and eat a lot still; you know it cuts down on our grocery bill at home. We'll come down here and eat and it is the real family atmosphere. We try to make it that way. My wife and I both work this very diligently and daily for the first six years of its existence. I mean I literally lived here as most folks who run restaurants know very well. Now my wife, she works for the school system; again I have—I'm a full-time Minister as well as—as doing this. So but—but it is still very much a family business and—and that's kind of the atmosphere that we're going for. We want people when they come in—you see all the stuff on the wall. My dad writes a local little article for the local paper about

once every three weeks called *Yesteryear* about just a lot of the things that happened way back when in Centerville and we have those things scattered on the wall. And have a lot of local Hickman County Bulldog jerseys and things like that—football helmets, so we try to make it a place where folks feel at home and welcome. They—they kind of know a lot about it when they come in because they may see some people on the walls that they know. The bar that's here at the—at the front of the restaurant was originally in an old grocery store here gosh close to 100 years ago and the—the story is told that Davey Crockett danced on that. He was—apparently had a little too much to drink one night coming through Centerville and he—he danced on that drunk. Now I can't verify that but I can't find anybody that can say that it's not true, so we—we tell the story as if though it were true.

**00:23:53**

So that—it's a real piece of memorabilia; a lot of folks can come in and say that—I've seen that bar before; I've seen that bar before. And—and they remember it, so it's just a real hometown—hometown place.

**00:24:06**

**RF:** How did you get a hold of the bar?

**00:24:09**

**DP:** My grandfather—Papa had acquired it; I forget how he got it but he was a real pack rat and never threw anything away. The store's name—well the fellow named Walt Thompson owned the store. My dad worked for him when he was a teenager; that was pretty much where everybody worked growing up. He would deliver groceries on his bicycle and things like that. I think it was an old—I say a meat counter; I know that he says a lot of bologna was sliced on it.

But somehow my grandfather ended up with it and when he passed we were looking through the house and looking at different things and again it was about the time we were getting ready to open this and came across it. And I thought well that would be a cool centerpiece for folks you know when they first come in the restaurant; that's the first thing you see. We have five stools there that if you want to belly up to the bar as it were you can and a lot of people sit there and eat. We keep you know local—we keep the news—the daily paper there and folks come and grab it and they'll read it while they're eating. And so it—it's a piece of nostalgia that a lot of people remember.

**00:25:11**

**RF:** Papa did—did he cook or—or barbecue more importantly?

**00:25:16**

**DP:** No; he didn't. My brother and I were—were and are the only ones in our family who kind of stumbled into that. He was a—just kind of a laborer; he—he had his hand in building a lot of the buildings here in the town of Centerville. A lot of the merchant stores he had a part of building. He was a bricklayer, masonry; there—there just wasn't much of anything that he—he could not do with his hands and that's—that's kind of how he—kind of how he stoned out his little piece of—of living. My dad worked for a couple of local plants here for the most part during his working days. My mom works for the Department of Health. She's still working right now getting ready to retire. But my brother and I are really the only two in our family who—who do this. It—it wasn't a family thing. Now there's a part of me that hopes that it continues after I'm gone—that my children will want to have a part in this. They may and they may not; I don't

know. So this wasn't something that was passed down to us; again just something that we learned when we worked in Dixon.

**00:26:20**

**RF:** Is—any members of your family, maybe your grandmother, your mother a good cook or famous for their cooking in the family?

**00:26:30**

**DP:** Well they're famous—they're famous with us. I mean they—

**00:26:34**

**RF:** Well what do they cook? What do you—what do you eat at home?

**00:26:37**

**DP:** My grandmother on my mother's side her specialty was brown beans, and so any time we'd go to her house and they lived—they—they—she's passed since but they lived down in the country in—in Lewis County which is close to here, you know brown beans, cornbread, corn—creamed corn, creamed corn, turkey and dressing. My mom is a fabulous cook; I can't say that she has a specialty necessarily. She does great at making sweets and things like that which we're big on that. And so you know we like to eat for sure. And—and so there—there have been a few things that—that we have—have served from time to time off and on that—that she has made. If we have some type of catering event and they want maybe a special type of cake you know or some cookies she'll help us out and do that. But so yeah; I mean there—there are a lot of good cooks in our—in our family and—and so we've—we've learned some—some little nuances from

them that maybe don't necessarily come out with the full product but hey why don't you add a little of this to your mayonnaise slaw? It will make it a little better—things like that, so there's—there's certainly been some family influences in some of the ingredients and some of the ways that we do things.

**00:27:54**

**RF:** What was the most difficult part of running a barbecue restaurant either when you started or now?

**00:28:00**

**DP:** I tell you; when I—when we first opened there was quite a bit of—I don't know if I want to use the word *hype*. When anything new opens in Centerville it's a big deal because the—Centerville is so small. Everybody knows what's going on and so for about the period of about um—it took us probably four months—five months to build this. So you have folks driving by every day and they realized something is happening. Well the local radio station did a little piece on us—coming soon; Papa KayJoe's Bar-B-Que, so it was kind of hyped up. Of course we you know advertised in the paper we were getting ready to open and all that. Anyhow, the first month we were open I just—I about cried every day because I didn't think there was any way that I could keep up the pace that we had started. Everybody in town literally every day wanted to come and eat here because it's new for one; everybody is going to try you out once. And then of course they kept coming back and—and I just thought there's no way—there is absolutely no way that I can physically keep up with this. The hours were the toughest thing for me in the beginning because we opened at 10:00 and close at 8:00; I would get here at 6:00, leave at 11:00; and it was just the—the pace was—was extreme. I was doing everything—I'm very anal about

the food. Now there's some things that I probably let go—I might not sweep—you know we might not keep the floors as clean as they should be as far as swept. You know there's some things I just tend to look over but the food—I want my hands—I wanted my hands in that food, maybe not literally but fixing it—every plate, every—every—everything. And so I just worked myself to death; wasn't very good at delegating at first. And I finally realized if I'm going to survive I've got to you know I got to let some other folks do some things here and teach them how to do it. So that was the hardest—that was the hardest part for me was learning that I've got to let go of some things okay and—and teach some folks to do that where I can focus on—on doing what I think we should do best which is—is cooking the meats and things of that nature. And that's not to say that—that the quality of any of that went down; it didn't. I tried to teach them how to do it right. So the—the—the most difficult thing for me and—and I'm very family oriented; you know now we have three children and working those long hours and still trying to find family time was—was the—the thing that was hardest for me to balance out. And I still don't know that I do it well. I think most anybody again who owns a restaurant would probably say the same things, especially if it's just a little sole proprietor restaurant, just a little mom and pop which is what we are and everything kind of falls on your shoulders. So I guess I was of the opinion that if it was going to get done right I was the one that had to do it and just—I just wore myself out. We opened—we were opened initially Monday through Saturday. I tried opening Sundays for a while; we're—and—and we tried to work that around going to church and it was just driving me insane. I couldn't you know—getting up, coming down here, getting it ready, going home, changing, going to church, coming back from church, coming back down here to work lunch, so predominantly in my—the first seven years or so of—of this restaurant's existence we were open Monday through Saturday. Well that gave us one day of rest and we

figured God rested a day; we should at least do that as well. Now with my partners onboard they—they opened it on Sunday, so now it is open seven days a week but I could not physically do it. So—so that's a long answer to your question but I think just the time that's involved and—and getting things done right that—that was probably the most difficult thing for me to get used to. I don't know if you ever get used to it; you just do what you have to—to get it done and—and to do it right.

**00:31:58**

**RF:** Well what's the secret to making good barbecue? Or how is good barbecue made?

**00:32:04**

**DP:** I think time is—is a major part of that as I said earlier; I think that the slower that you can cook it at—at a safe heat—you know you don't want to obviously let it get lukewarm but I think time is—is an essential ingredient. We—the way we prepare and cook the barbecue, we utilize the grease. A lot of folks I have heard of people who will cook Boston butts and/or shoulders; they'll put them on the grill, season or salt them in some way and then they never touch them again ever—until they're done. I mean they just cook from the bottom up. To me that produces a real dry product, a very dry product and so the way that we do it, we cook them for a while—both sides. Flip them back and forth. At one point of the process we pan them up and put them in a metal—long metal pans. We put—we foil them up; once they've gotten what we consider to be enough—enough smoke to—to flavor it, then it essentially cooks probably half the time in—in pans which holds the grease. The grease doesn't—it doesn't get wasted. And so we—we mix part of that grease back in with the meat, which produces a very tender—it's moist yet not greasy.

00:33:25

**RF:** Do—do you baste it or do you mix it in—?

00:33:30

**DP:** No, no; no, we—we—when we—when we pull the barbecue we have—I mean we—we pull—pull it off and it's hot. I mean it's steaming hot. We have these heavy rubber gloves and we pull the—pull the bones and all that out, put the meat in this big pot that we mix it in and then pour the grease back over the top of it. And then with these gloves we just—we just start mixing. And—and it takes about five—ten minutes to you know pull out some of the waste; there's not much but pull out a little bit of gristle or this or that and—and—and that's—to me, my opinion that's where a lot of places lose their flavor. That's why you've got to have sauce to put on it because you—grease, I know when folks think of grease they think of—of unhealthy which obviously it—it is but think of—of you know grease as your friend. Pork fat rules I think is what—what's his name says, and it does. I mean I think that's where the flavor is at. I have a buddy who had moved to Lake Geneva, Wisconsin a few years ago to sell real estate and he developed a friendship with a guy who had a restaurant and he fancied himself on learning how to cook southern barbecue. It's a tourist town and he flew me up there to sort of teach him. Well he had a—one of these small electric rotisserie pits that you, you know you add a little Liquid Smoke and—and maybe a stick of wood to—to cook it with. And he could not figure out—and he could not get it right; it didn't taste good to him. It was just bland and dry. So I went up there and he cooked them and he opened the door and he said what do we need—where—where am I going wrong? And there was a drip pan at the bottom and it was full of grease. And I said that's where your flavor is at. So we took the—took the meat off, kind of pulled it, took that drip pan

and poured that grease back on top of it and you would think that—we would have hit gold. He just absolutely was beside his self at how much different that meat tasted once we poured the grease or the fat and mixed it back in with it—how—how much better it was; I mean that's where the flavor is at.

**00:35:33**

So my opinion for the way we do it anyway, the—the key to good barbecue is—is grease. I know it sounds—I know it doesn't sound good but I mean it's not greasy but it's—

**00:35:43**

**RF:** No; it sounds real good.

**00:35:44**

**DP:** Yeah; it is—yeah.

**00:35:47**

**RF:** Did that carry over from Cherry's or did you—?

**00:35:50**

**DP:** Yes; that's exactly right.

**00:35:51**

**RF:** It sounds like Cherry's—I mean both the cornbread and the use of the grease—the two things that I have not seen anywhere else, it sounds like the—the man behind Cherry's was you know kind of an inventor?

00:36:08

**DP:** Yeah; yeah I will say this. Those—or the cornbread was certainly something that they were doing when we got there. Now when we cooked shoulders in Dixon we—we wrapped them twice and—and actually in two pieces of aluminum foil, wrapped them up really tightly and that's where the grease—the grease would—would stay in there. Since we came here using Boston butts we put—we—we don't wrap them in foil. We put them in these long—long pans and actually we put the barbecue back in there. But anyhow, it—it is something that he did and again we've—we've tweaked it a little bit and done some different things but the base concept and idea certainly came from—from working there in Dixon and—and again it—those—some of those things have evolved over the years and we've put our little touch on it. But the—the grease is absolutely where it's at. I've—I've eaten a lot of barbecue and—and that's not to say that—that other barbecue—barbecue that's dry isn't—isn't necessarily good. I mean everybody has their own different tastes and likes and dislikes, but this barbecue is real easy to eat. You don't have to tear it out—off with your—your teeth. It's kind of funny; I have a lot of folks with small children and then a lot of folks with older parents who don't have very good teeth [*Laughs*] say that your barbecue is easy to eat because it's—it's soft and it's moist and it's—it's—it's—it's pretty good.

00:37:38

**RF:** Right and—and just one more question; Mr. Cherry, did he come up with his ideas do you know? Did he get them from somewhere else?

00:37:44

**DP:** His—his father, his father's name was Moon—Moon Cherry and I—I believe that he was also in the restaurant business before Bob and I'm not exactly sure which of those two folks—it was either he or his dad that came up with the—some of these base recipes. I know that some of the sauce recipes were his mom's. Her name was Rebecca so you know it—they—they—I guess they all kind of came up with some of it, came up with some of it together. So and again like—like most good things it did kind of just kind of evolved as we—as we—as we went.

**00:38:27**

**RF:** And just one more; why do you think barbecue is so important to Tennessee or why do you think all—everyone in Tennessee eats barbecue?

**00:38:35**

**DP:** I think most folks around here—I don't want to say just completely in the South—you know have a lot of meat and threes for instance; you know that. I don't know that—that's a—that terminology is used in many places. We have two or three meat and threes here—restaurant meat and threes. And folks want meat with—they're not very many vegetarians around here—raised on meat and taters you know and I think meat is a substantial part of a meal whether it be breakfast with bacon or ham, sausage, lunch or supper; I just think folks like red meat. Now I know that you know there are all types of studies out that red meat is not good for you and this and that but it doesn't seem to be slowing most folks down. And it's—I mean it's—it's what has—it's certainly what has kept us in business.

**00:39:34**

**RF:** Well I want to thank you. If there is anything else you'd like to add I'd like to hear it but I want to thank for you the—.

**00:39:39**

**DP:** I think I gave you all you could possibly want [*Laughs*] but I appreciate you coming down.

**00:39:44**

**RF:** All right; well thank you very much, sir.

**00:39:46**

**DP:** Okay.

**00:39:46**

**[End Devin Pickard-Papa KayJoe's Interview]**