



Kaitlyn Elliot
Poorhouse Sorghum

Date: November 1, 2018
Location: University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY
Interviewer: Annemarie Anderson
Transcription: Diana Dombrowski
Length: One hour and eight minutes
Project: Southern Sugars

[00:00:00.00]

Annemarie A.: Today is November 1—I can't believe it's November already—2018, and I am in Lexington, Kentucky on the campus of the University of Kentucky in the Agriculture Library with Kaitlyn Elliot. I'll get you to introduce yourself real quick for the recorder.

[00:00:25.08]

Kaitlyn E.: Okay. Well, my name's Kaitlyn Elliot. I am a junior here at the University of Kentucky and this is my fourth year here, though. I've been doing the college thing for a long time. I'm also a sorghum producer alongside my grandfather. It's one of my absolute favorite things to be able to do, and it's coming up on my eighth year of doing that with him, which sounds like a really long time for me to be so young, but I really enjoy doing that. Besides just making sorghum and being in school for a really long time, I do really love to work at the preschool I work at right now with the little kids, and I'm involved in a sorority, too. I do a lot of fun things on the side as well.

[00:01:04.03]

Annemarie A.: That's good. Could you tell us your birth date and where you were born?

[00:01:09.25]

Kaitlyn E.: So, my birth date is August 24, 1997, so I'm twenty-one years old and I was born in Danville, Kentucky, which is about thirty minutes away from my hometown. It's actually the closest hospital, Wal-Mart, anything you could possibly need.

[00:01:25.10]

Annemarie A.: That's great. Could you introduce us to—for I guess a lot of people who will listen to this won't be able to experience where you're from—could you tell us where you're from and then kind of describe it?

[00:01:37.19]

Kaitlyn E.: So I'm from Gravel Switch, Kentucky, which is absolutely in the middle of nowhere. If you look on the map, it's going to be really hard to be able to find, but we are about thirty minutes away from Danville, which is kind of the heart of Kentucky. So, we're still in Central Kentucky, just a little bit south. As far as things that Gravel Switch has, if you go to the next small city over, we have a Dollar General, which is about fifteen minutes away from the house. But Gravel Switch itself has a gas station and a post office. We're an extremely small town. Everyone there's super friendly. Our next-door neighbors have become our best friends. It's a really awesome place to live, but it can be really hard to find. We do live on a pretty long road, and there's only three or four houses out there. When I was a kid, it was really hard to have birthday parties, 'cause friends would get lost a thousand times tryin' to come to the house.

[00:02:30.21]

Annemarie A.: I bet. Could you talk a little bit about growin' up there? What was it like?

[00:02:32.24]

Kaitlyn E.: Growing up in Gravel Switch was pretty cool, because being so far away from the city, you get to spend a lot of time outside. That's kind of where my love for being outside and farming and all of that comes from. It stems from being in Gravel Switch for so long. When I was a kid, all I ever did was play outside. My grandparents, they garden, so I would help them out in the garden quite a bit, whether it be green beans or strawberries, anything like that, I loved to be able to go out there. Eventually, that ended up turning into me joining FFA later on and realizing that I wanted to actually get involved in farming, and that's when sorghum kind of started for us. It started for my grandfather a long time ago, but then he kind of restarted when me and my cousin got involved. But that's kind of what living in Gravel Switch is like. I would go to Danville for school once I got to be a little bit older, and sometimes you would go to the movies, but even Danville's really small, so there's not a whole lot to do there.

[00:03:39.03]

Annemarie A.: That's great. You were mentioning, your grandparents had a garden, what were some of the things they would grow?

[00:03:44.13]

Kaitlyn E.: As far as the garden grows, our garden has always been insanely large. My grandfather likes to plant way more than we could ever eat, and my grandmother has had the most difficult time learning how to can in the past few years. We have finally felt like we've mastered it in the last couple, but we have grown anything from green beans to corn, potatoes, squash, zucchini. For some reason, he loves to buy random pepper plants

and plant them, and then you get to find out if they're sweet or hot later on. We really try our luck at watermelons, doesn't usually work too well. Anything you can think of that we could possibly get by with growing, it's somewhere in the garden. That's kind of just how my grandfather's always been. Even now, I don't live in Gravel Switch anymore—of course, I'm at UK a lot. The garden's just as big, and there's only two of them in the house, so I get to take a lot of plants coming home with me when I'm here at UK as well as my aunt and my mom. We end up with more vegetables than we ever know what to do with because of how big the garden is.

[00:04:48.20]

Annemarie A.: That's great. Do you have any siblings?

[00:04:51.28]

Kaitlyn E.: I do not. I am an only child, and I actually lived with my grandparents and my mom for a long time. My mom had me when she was pretty young, so she stayed around the house, and that ended up being a good thing for the both of us, I think. I learned a lot from basically getting to have two moms and a really awesome dad, or my grandpa, in that case. I've definitely really had a lot to be thankful for because of that, because I was the only kid—most people think that you get whatever you want when you're an only kid, that's not how it works when you live with your grandparents. In fact, the opposite happens. When the other grandkids come over to visit, she starts baking like the cookies and all the nice stuff. You feel a little disappointed. But at the same time, you get really

awesome dinners every night of the week. She's my best friend, so I can't give her too much shade, I guess is the good word.

[00:05:44.06]

Annemarie A.: That's great. What's your grandmother and your grandfathers' name, for the record?

[00:05:47.21]

Kaitlyn E.: My grandmother's name is Betty Elliot, my grandfather's name is Jimmy Elliot.

[00:05:52.03]

Annemarie A.: Okay. And what's your mom's name?

[00:05:53.27]

Kaitlyn E.: Renee Elliot.

[00:05:54.16]

Annemarie A.: Cool. Could you talk a little bit about, you're mentionin' the relationship you had with your grandmother. Could you talk a little bit about the relationship you had with your granddad?

[00:06:05.08]

Kaitlyn E.: Yeah, absolutely. So, me and both my grandparents are really close. With my grandmother, we typically spend a lot of our time in the house together. With my grandfather, he kind of toted me around. Obviously, in the garden. For a long time, he was involved with the American Legion, because he was in the National Guard, so I spent a lot of my childhood around past veterans and things, hanging out with them as well as, eventually, when we started playing softball, he became my softball coach for a little while. He's done absolutely everything he can for me. Then we did sorghum together, and that's what we're still doing right now. We started when I was a freshman in high school. He started a little bit before that with my cousin, Lexi. That year was kind of a trial run. It was just about a week-long project where they kind of got things up and running. We didn't really have more than one cooking that year, just to kind of try it out. I did help just a little bit that year, as well, mainly because Lexi came in the house and was like, "I can absolutely not do this anymore. I need help." But we gotta let her figure out where her passion was. After I got involved that year, I realized that I wanted to learn what was going on out there besides just come out and help a little bit. I really wanted to be involved. So, the next year, I got a little bit more involved. At the time, I was still young. My grandmother was scared to death that I would get on the tractor and end up wrecking it or whatever. She did not want me on the tractor. So, I was told I was allowed to plant the seeds, allowed to do everything else. But she was a little hesitant. So, that year, I went out after the plants had kind of grown up. We went out and cut and I went ahead and ground the stalks, and then I helped with the cooking process, and I helped bottle.

[Fire alarm sounds]

[Break in recording]

[00:07:54.23]

Annemarie A.: We are back. Before we were interrupted, you were talkin' about how you first got started makin' sorghum. Could you talk a little bit about your granddad's history with sorghum, I guess? Kind of give us a background of how he knew about making sorghum.

[00:08:18.20]

Kaitlyn E.: Yeah. So, my grandpa started making sorghum with his dad when he was very, very young. So, from the most I've gathered, he literally started doing this when he was six, seven, eight. Very, very young kid, and helped his family make sorghum syrup for years. He kept that going until, I do believe he was in his thirties, and that's when his dad's health started to kind of deteriorate. He wasn't able to do as much, and I think one of the things that, really, I love about going out to the farm is working with my grandpa. If it's anything like his dad and his relationship, I didn't ever get to meet his dad, I'm sure it was that same kind of aspect. With that one, it's really hard to keep going. So, he stopped making sorghum for a little bit. Then he decided to get back into it in his fifties with my cousin, Lexi. Lexi needed an FFA project, and she had come out to the house. Of course, my grandpa didn't offer up the garden first; she could have done that, but he had been wanting a reason to start making sorghum again anyways. He had kind of brought the idea up to my grandmother, and she was like, you don't have any help. This is gonna be a

big investment. And he took it upon himself to start it back up again, and then Lexi helped him along with that process for a little while. But he has really loved making sorghum all along. I think he missed making it the most. During that little short frame where he just wasn't doing it as much anymore, because even then, he still always kept sorghum in the house. There's never been a time when there hasn't been syrup in the house, but he is very keen on the fact that he thinks he makes the best around. So, I think it bothered him that it wasn't his sorghum in the house. So, we had to do something about that. Now, it's a me and him project. Lexi is not necessarily as keen on the farm, but she is going into journalism, so she's kind of helped us in other aspects, kind of getting our name out. She's really good at drawing, so she helped with our labels that we have, all that good stuff. But he has loved producing sorghum since he can remember. He hasn't ever told me a whole, whole lot about his dad, but from what I gather, his dad learned from his dad, and it's kind of been a family trend. We do believe I'm fourth generation. That's what we've come to the conclusion of. It could be even past that, because there weren't a whole lot of stories that my grandfather got to get out of his dad. He ended up having Alzheimer's. So, once it got to that time when you really would want to get stories from your parents, he didn't get to get those anymore. But he loves it. I think working out there right now with me kind of reminds him of that. He'll tell me all kinds of stories about when him and his dad were growing up and they'd do it. When him and his dad were around, not only have I heard it from him, but I've heard it from a lot of other producers or former producers that it wasn't just a family that would get together, it would be a full neighborhood. So, he grew up on a road kinda similar to where ours is. The houses nearby would all grow sorghum; they would all cut it down together. They

would all bring it to one house, and then they would grind it and cook it as one big neighborhood event. That was what he did for years. My aunt and my mother were involved in that process, too. They used to have a horse-drawn mill that would turn around and around, but after a while, of course, horses kind of get a little bit older. It had gotten to the point where they were either going to have to get a new horse to be able to keep it up, or they were going to have to figure something else out. So, instead, they of course got a four-wheeler, because what draws kids in more than a four-wheeler that they get to ride? So, my aunt was super excited to ride the four-wheeler. She always like to tell me this story. Until she found out she'd be riding it in circles for hours. So, every kid in the neighborhood would take turns on the four-wheeler. They'd just keep going in circles and going in circles. My aunt said when they all got tired and decided to go home, she would still be out there. But that was just kind of something they all did together. Now, of course, it's just us, but some of our neighbors have started to get really interested. So, this year, we've had a few of them come out. I think my grandfather absolutely ate that up, 'cause he was like, "It's kind of becoming something like what we used to do."

[00:12:59.11]

Annemarie A.: That's really awesome. So, this is kind of a family— you have a family history of making sorghum.

[00:13:06.03]

Kaitlyn E.: Yes.

[00:13:06.03]

Annemarie A.: Could you talk a little bit about the name Poorhouse Sorghum? Why you guys chose that?

[00:13:14.06]

Kaitlyn E.: So, Poorhouse Sorghum was kinda chosen because we live on Poorhouse Road. It is an extremely family-oriented business, and of course, me and my grandfather are very close, and all of our greatest memories have always been right there on the road. So, because of that, that was kind of how we came up with the name. We wanted something that would kind of give everyone a little glimpse as to where we're from and kind of tell a little bit about ourselves just by buying the product, which, everyone always comments on the name. It's one of the things that kind of sticks out to people when they see it. So, I couldn't be happier with the fact that we chose to do that.

[00:13:51.00]

Annemarie A.: That's great. You were mentionin', growin' up, you always had sorghum in the house. When you were a kid, how did you like it?

[00:14:00.18]

Kaitlyn E.: So, that's a pretty funny topic, because sorghum has a very unique taste. Anyone who's had it will tell you immediately whether they like it or they don't. It took me a little while before I developed a taste for it. When I was a kid, I was not very keen on it at all. Then, I think it was really, it was probably my second year making it before I started

tasting it. I was like, "This is pretty good stuff." Some of that came from probably just being involved in it and it being so laborious; I was like, Man, I did a good job. Like rewarding myself. But also, once you figure out what you want to put it on or what you want to use it as, it develops kind of a whole different flavor. Freshman year of high school, because I still wasn't necessarily keen on the flavor, when I would talk to students about it, they'd always want to try sorghum. My biggest fear when I was a freshman in high school was, I didn't want people to think that I made something that didn't taste good. So, instead of giving them just sorghum, I would make sorghum cookies, and they all loved them. After a while, I started actually bringing in jars, and you always still have a couple kids that don't like it, but you're more surprised by the amount that do. Even though it has a really unique flavor, it's super sweet, and it tastes really good on specifically breakfast foods. It's what the South is known for, is having it on biscuits and butter. But I've done it with pancakes, we've tried pies, all kinds of sweets. Once you kind of figure out what you're doin' with it, you really like the taste.

[00:15:36.02]

Annemarie A.: That's great. I think maybe I'd like to talk a little bit about . . . you mention a little bit about the early days and how you kind of got started in the process of making sorghum, but could you talk a little bit about making it your own and kind of the process of decidin', "Okay, this is what I want to do." And the FFAproject and how the operation has grown out of that.

[00:16:07.02]

Kaitlyn E.: Yeah. So, freshman year, it really was mainly an FFA project and me just kind of wanting to learn how to farm. Then, first year, I was . . . every time I would come in the house, I'd sit down and I'd be like, "Phew, that was hard work." I still really loved it, but at the time, I was like, "I don't know. Is this something I want to do?" Every night when you come in a little bit tired, you question it for a second. But there's nothing better than going outside and working with your grandpa for hours, getting to talk, and really seeing your work go to good use, when you go out to farmer's market and you see people who absolutely love your product, or you hear that stories about people who used to make sorghum. There's nothing better than that. Freshman year, we made our sorghum, and then we didn't end up selling it at farmer' market until the next spring. Farmer's markets usually over by the time we get done with sorghum. It's a little too chilly outside for that. So, in the spring, we would sell our product, and that was when I started to hear all these comments about how awesome it was and just all these different stories. I was like, well, you know, we'll just keep going with this. So, sophomore year I did the same thing, except then I really started to realize I enjoyed it. It wasn't just—it was nice to go outside and talk with my grandfather. I really liked getting to play in the soil. I liked being able to plant things. I liked getting to watch it grow. I enjoyed every aspect of it. So, I became a lot more involved in the farming process. Then, my junior year, I realized we were starting to grow quite a bit and me and my grandfather both, we don't much of a business background. My grandfather's always grew sorghum on the farm, but as far as selling goes, they used to do one big festival and that was it. And just did one single thing. So, I ended up taking a—not even a business class at school. It was a program that was after school. So, three hours every Monday night, I would go, and I would learn about how to

be a business owner, basically. I took lots and lots of different classes, and it really has helped us out quite a bit, so I'm very glad that I did that. But we got to have our own little investors' panel, and I actually got a little bit of money, kind of like a grant money type of deal, to be able to grow the business and actually be able to take a little bit more ownership in it. When you're in high school, you don't really have money at the time, so the only money I had was money from sorghum. So, between some money from sorghum and some money I got from grants, and some money from competitions from FFA, I put that money towards actually investing in the sorghum. We bought a new box, we worked on-- half of the mill I bought, and the other half grandpa took care of. We bought quite a few different things that year that really helped grow the business. So, at that point, I really took a little bit more ownership of it, and I kept that going until senior year of high school. Now we're a 50/50 business, so half the money comes from me, half the money comes from Grandpa. We work on it together as much as we can. It's been kinda hard for me in school, but on weekends, from Friday night when I get home till Sunday night when I leave, that's where I'm at. Most of my friends here at school know that, if you try and text me on a weekend and ask me to hang out, most likely I'm gonna tell you I'm at the farm, but you're welcome to join. I've had friends take me up on that offer, too. They always love to come out. But that's kinda where we are now. We have grown quite a bit from farmer's markets where we used to sell. We continue to go to farmer's market now, but a lot of our market has actually switched to being online business. Because the FarmHer show aired, I was on FarmHer, and they did a little segment on the farm and me and my grandfather. That got a lot of business. So, I realized then that I was going to have to find a way to sell to customers out of state. So, now we have an Etsy account, and

we do sell sorghum off of it, as well as we sell to a lot of restaurants. So, one of the things that people don't realize when they start is, when you start out a business, there's a lot of different rules and regulations. As a freshman, sophomore in high school, I would have never dreamed that I would be going to classes and learning about these kind of things so young. But, in order for us to sell to restaurants, we had to become commercially licensed. So, we ended up building a full commercial kitchen that we have outside. We have a little building outside that we have that in, for me and my grandfather to be able to use where we will bottle all of our sorghum so that we can sell it to restaurants if we want to, we can sell it out of state, we can sell it in stores, which is something we plan on doing pretty soon. Then we started making barbecue sauce, too. So, sorghum's really awesome and I love it. But, the only problem is is that a lot of people are under the impression that they want fresh sorghum, right? So, they want it during the fall, typically. Then, when summer comes around, they don't want last year's sorghum. They are gonna wait until you get the new stuff. But when summer comes around, also, it's barbecue season. So, you take last year's sorghum, you make it into an awesome barbecue sauce, they don't care that it's last year's sorghum anymore. Instead, they love the barbecue sauce. That also kinda helped open us up to people who aren't as keen on the taste of sorghum. They still love the product, and then they might have the barbecue sauce for a while and then, eventually, they'll end up buying a jar of sorghum, 'cause they're like, this stuff tastes pretty good. Then they'll ask for recipes for cookies and cakes and all kinds of good stuff. So, it's really helped us to broaden our horizons but also get a whole new customer dynamic interested in sorghum in general.

[00:21:57.04]

Annemarie A.: That's really smart. Could you talk a little bit about the recipe development?

'Cause you mentioned pancakes and cakes and cookies and pies, and then this barbecue sauce. How do you go about developing those recipes?

[00:22:12.15]

Kaitlyn E.: So, most of the recipes that I have are either things that have come from family—so,

we do my mom's side of the family, they've used sorghum for a long time. My dad's side of the family has, as well. So, there is a festival that we go to every year, it's almost like a family reunion, and it's in Gravel Switch. They have a little old community center there.

A lot of people on my dad's side of the family, although they don't make sorghum anymore, they had great-grandparents, even great-great-grandparents, who did. They still have all those old recipes. So, when they come to buy sorghum, they'll tell us a little bit about, "Oh, I'm gonna use it in this." Or "I'm gonna use it in that." Eventually, I've kind of found that there is a cookbook at that festival that you can buy that has a lot of those recipes in them. So, I tried out a lot of those, as well as when we go to the Sorghum Association, kind of convention I guess you could call it, they have recipe books, as well.

As far as the barbecue sauce recipe, we were looking at some of the other recipes that were out there, and we had tried some of those for barbecue sauce, but it just wasn't what I wanted. So, we just kept kinda playin' around with the ingredients until we found a taste that we really, really liked. Then that's the recipes that we use now. The main problem that my grandfather had with most of the recipes—no one should be surprised—they didn't have enough sorghum in them. So, most of the times, you're gonna get an extra,

extra sweet barbecue sauce with us. Very, very good. And Grandfather is extremely prideful of the barbecue sauce, almost as much as the sorghum anymore, because it is pretty good stuff. As far as cookie recipes, there's one in particular that I got from my grandmother, and that's the one that I typically stick with. Some of the other things I've dabbled in, but I've noticed that I am not the best at making a pie. I try so hard, it just never gets anywhere. But even if it doesn't look so pretty, it still tastes pretty good.

[00:24:15.03]

Annemarie A.: That's great. Could you talk a little bit—and I'm not sure if you actually talk about this or not—but what are some of the restaurants that you sell sorghum to?

[00:24:25.06]

Kaitlyn E.: Yeah. So, there are a few different ones that we sell to. Most of them are out of Danville, so we've sold to Jane Barleycorn in Danville. It is a really nice, like a locally-grown food restaurant, as well as Grace Cafe. Grace Cafe is in Danville. We've actually given them some sorghum and some barbecue sauce in the past. They're really awesome. They're a pay-what-you-can restaurant in Danville. So, people from the community will come in, they'll pay whatever they can to eat, and then in return, they'll get amazing food. Most of it's really local and fresh, and they partnered with our farmer's market. There's a restaurant in Lebanon called the County Seat, and it was featured on the FarmHer show, as well. You got to see kind of a little bit inside the restaurant, what they used it for. They have this awesome waffle appetizer that they drizzle our sorghum on top of. Tastes amazing. And we keep expanding. So, we go out to different restaurants. Typically what

I'll do is, when we're off season, I'm either at Farmer's market or I'm out talking to different restaurants and producers. This year, however, we've had so many customers online, we've actually decided we're going to wait a little bit before we go out to anymore restaurants and things, to kind of see where this goes. Because it's nothing for us to get seven or eight new customers a week online, and some of them are ordering pretty large supplies. In fact, now we have local farm stores in different states that are selling our sorghum, which is pretty impressive. Because of that, we've had to kind of figure out where we're going to go next. We really want to expand, but when it comes to expansion, it's more money, more land, and we definitely have plans to for next year. We actually have some more land set up, and we're going to for sure get more sorghum out. I'm gonna have to find more weekends to be able to work, I don't know how all that's all gonna plan out yet, but we're kinda getting to the point where want to expand even more. The hope is that, eventually, we might be able to sell to Kroger and some of these big stores that people would typically go to and, maybe one day our sorghum will be something you buy just like ketchup, right off the shelf. That's what I want, at least.

[00:26:43.27]

Annemarie A.: That's awesome. You were mentionin' sellin' at farmer's markets. Where do you sell or where do you go when you go to the farmer's market?

[00:26:53.26]

Kaitlyn E.: So, we set up at the Boyle County farmer's market. It's in Danville, Kentucky. We actually are set up at the high school right now. We used to set up at the Washington

County farmer's market, too, but it's a lot to take on multiple farmer's markets at one time. Usually, the times start to clash. But we do have a really awesome Thanksgiving sale and a Christmas sale that's coming up, so those are our big things when we're off-season. Farmer's markets, though, are probably—if you're going to ever get involved in, especially like a sorghum industry or any kind of local food and you just want to get a nice start, farmer's markets are the best because the people there are very kind, are willing to help you with anything you need, plus, the customers there are also really awesome. They'll give you honest opinions about your product. Sometimes when you're getting started, that can be really good or it can kind of be kind of devastating at the same time. You know? But they're very, very honest. When we first started, we sold our sorghum very, very cheap. We were not making much money off it at all. We had several customers come up to us and say, "I just want you to know, you worked too hard for this." It's nice that you have people like that at farmer's markets, whereas when you start out somewhere a lot bigger, if you're undercutting yourself, they're probably not gonna tell you about it. Same thing with how hard you work on it. They'll look at the pictures and things, and they'll talk to you for hours about what you do. They really want to know. So, definitely recommend, if you're ever gonna do somethin' like this, start out at a farmer's market. Start out somewhere really nice and small. Then kind of start dabbling into big business ventures.

[00:28:34.04]

Annemarie A.: Seems like you have an awesome sense of community there.

[00:28:38.21]

Kaitlyn E.: Yes. They're very fantastic. I will say, our customers that we have at Danville and in Gravel Switch, they are very, very awesome people. They're very nice, and they come back to us with recipes, they come back to us with stories. They'll tell us all about what they did this weekend at their barbecue that they used their sauce on. It's nice to get to have that kind of interaction with your customers. I do enjoy selling online; it's nice for us to be able to get it to other states, but you don't have that personal interaction as much. But I will say, we do sometimes get messages on our Etsy account, and they'll tell us still about what they're doing with it. I love it. I always—my grandfather doesn't know how to use the technology as well, so I will send him pictures of the messages that we get so he can read them on his cell phone. Hopefully he can read them. Most of the time, he'll send me a text back. But we both really enjoy getting to hear what customers are doing with our product.

[00:29:39.23]

Annemarie A.: That's great! That's great. I kinda want to— and if you have anything else you want to say about marketing and selling, you can talk about it right now, or we can do it later. Do you have anything else you want to say?

[00:29:51.21]

Kaitlyn E.: Nope.

[00:29:53.10]

Annemarie A.: Okay. I want to ask you about, like, growing and harvesting and producing, and I want to start out and ask you about varieties of sorghum, because there are lots of different kinds. There are some kinds that were developed recently and then there are some heirloom varieties. What kind do you use and how do you source those seeds, and how do you decide what to use?

[00:30:18.04]

Kaitlyn E.: So, we definitely have experimented in the last few years. We have planted Della since we started. Dale and Della have been our two varieties that we've been pretty true to, and we plant a little bit of Della every year. We don't plant any Dale any longer, and that's just something that we've decided we've not had as good of luck with. Still an awesome variety, just not as good where we're at. We do plant a few of those Kentucky varieties, I can't think of the numbers behind them, but the ones that have been instructed that they grow well here. Any time you have an extension office that releases a Kentucky 0065, I think is what we have, or some sorghum variety that's based off your state, you know that it's usually gonna grow pretty well. The other variety that we grow, I cannot think of for anything right now, has a very interesting name. It is an heirloom variety. So, those seeds that we like to plant, if we don't plant Della or we don't plant one of those Kentucky numbered varieties, we plant heirloom seeds. In fact, we have one that we've planted this year that the man who gave it to us, he's been planting sorghum for years. This seed has been passed down through generations and generations. He doesn't know the name of it. My grandfather doesn't know what it is. We planted it this year. He loves it. But we're still trying to figure out what seed this is. Most likely, we're going to end up

having to send it off somewhere and have them tell us, because it's one of the best varieties we've ever received. You can tell it's an heirloom variety just the way it grows. The seed stalk, or where the seed head itself is, it's something what my grandfather likes to call broomcorn. It actually will spread apart. The variety I was thinking of was umbrella, by the way, 'cause umbrella does the same thing. It will kind of spread apart at the top instead of make that nice little, pretty stalk, kind of it, will just spread apart like that. So, Grandfather loves to stick with the heirlooms. I do, too. I find it to be even more of kind of that going back to old ways type of thing. I like to stick with the heirloom seed. I love to be able to use the heirloom equipment when we can, kind of all the things that kind of started sorghum. That's some of my favorite stuff. Typically, we will plant the seeds. We'll allow them to grow. Then, another thing that we do that's a little unique, we—for a long time, we cut every single stalk down by hand. We now have a corn binder, but we still end up cutting more than half by hand every year. Then we will strip the leaves off. So, if you talked to other sorghum producers, some of them may and some of them may not do this. We've found that it gives it a sweeter taste, but there was also my great-grandfather it would have been, told my grandpa years ago that you did not let a stalk go through the sorghum mill with a leaf on it. That was his big thing. He didn't want that to happen. He thought then that it affected the flavor. From doing a lot of research on sorghum and things, I have realized that it does; it's just that excess plant material gives it a little bit more of a bitter taste. But a lot of the things that we do, like picking out our seed, picking out our equipment, we do based on things that were done the old way—just as old-timey as it gets. And I love to do it like that. It's a lot of fun for us.

[00:33:46.27]

Annemarie A.: That's great. The man that gave you those heirloom seeds that you guys haven't identified yet, was he from Kentucky?

[00:33:53.24]

Kaitlyn E.: He is. I'm trying to think of his first name. He's a Lanum, and he's from Gravel Switch, as well. He's actually one of our cousins. My grandfather got that seed from him for two reasons: one, my grandfather knew that he had heirloom seed, but two, he thinks that some of that may actually be some of his dad's old original seed, because of the fact that they grew sorghum together. That was his hope. When he saw it grow this year, he was just super excited, because he says that looks exactly like what his dad grew. And every cooking that we tasted, he loved the flavor of. It had a very high brix level on it, too. So, that's a big thing with sorghum. When you're kind of checking the stalks and things, you want them to be at a certain brix, as far as the juice content goes, as well as your syrup itself. You want it to be at a certain brix, because that's the sweetness inside of it. That's how much of the sugar content there is in that stalk. Then, when you produce the syrup, you want it to be—a 70's kind of the lowest that you would ever want it to be, and that, in my opinion, is bitter. We like for all of our sorghum to be in the 80s range. So, most of our sorghum this year was like an 84 brix, which is pretty high, as far as sugar content goes because you want it to be super sweet. You don't want it to have a bitter aftertaste. I prefer mine to be sweeter, anyways.

[00:35:23.10]

Annemarie A.: That's great. The soil also, I'm findin' out talkin' to different producers, is . . . has a lot to do with the flavor and the taste of sorghum. Could you talk a little bit about that?

[00:35:37.07]

Kaitlyn E.: So, the soil does have a big influence on the sorghum flavor as well. As far as being in central Kentucky goes, if you think about kind of the soil makeup of here, we still have like a lot of limestone in Kentucky soils. That's one of the reasons that sorghum, especially, grows really well—or just plants in general. We do have a pretty good luck growing things here in Kentucky because of that. Our soil, right now, we've noticed—we're on eight years, right? So we're eight years, and we've been planting one plot in the same spot each time. This year, that sorghum did not come up very well at all. That's when we've kind of realized, we've probably gotten to a point that we've started to deplete the nutrients in that soil. We're gonna have to give it a rest. That was another factor in us finding more land, is we're gonna have some of our ground a break. But soil has a lot of—I'm actually in a soil science class right now. There's a lot of things about soil in general that can really affect your plant's growth. Another big thing here in Kentucky which can kind of be a downfall for sorghum producers is, we have a lot of clay in our soil. So, everyone thinks that clay is awesome because it holds a lot of water, and it does, but when you're growing a drought-tolerant crop, you don't need it to hold a lot of water. So, when we have a summer like we did this year, it rained a whole lot, that's soil's holding all that water. So, even though it looks dry on the top, there's quite a bit of water underneath that those plants are still getting—which is awesome. We want for our plants to have water, but when you're growing a plant that the more water it is, the less sugar

content you're gonna get, you don't want that as much. So, Kentucky definitely has, though, the really awesome side, we've got all that limestone. But especially in central Kentucky, we've also got a lot of clay. That can sometimes make for a difficult year. But at the same time, if we have a summer that's a little bit drier, we're one of the lucky farmers in that sense, because our crop doesn't care that it's a little bit drier outside. In fact, it'll grow in rain, but when it's drier outside, sometimes it thrives. We've even noticed that on years when we have rain and then it might be almost like drought for two weeks, and then rain, drought for two weeks. It really does well. It's like it gets all that water for a little bit and then it dries up, allows for that sugar content to build back up, and then does the same thing. So, that's just a little tidbit on soils as far as sorghum producing goes.

[00:38:18.18]

Annemarie A.: That's super interesting. I think too, I've been struck with the ingenuity of people who grow sorghum, because it's not like you're growin' corn or cotton on a large scale. You guys have to get really inventive with the way that you decide to harvest and then produce, because it's a lot of work.

[00:38:40.24]

Kaitlyn E.: It is.

[00:38:41.20]

Annemarie A.: Could you talk—I mean, you've already mentioned the corn binder, using that to harvest, but could you talk a little bit about some of ways you guys have decided to use different products to help with labor saving?

[00:38:58.27]

Kaitlyn E.: Yes. So, sorghum is very interesting, because when you're growing it on—especially for syrup-making. When you're growing it for ethanol, different things like that, there's a whole different process that you'll go about. But when you're just making syrup and you're only growing a few acres, because really, it does not take very many acres of sorghum to grow for syrup production. We have close to about two acres now, and we get anywhere between four to six hundred gallons of syrup off those just two acres. Right? So, if we increase that, we're just going to keep growing and keep growing and keep growing. That's a lot of just pure sorghum that we're using. Because of that, we can't use the big sorghum equipment that you would use for ethanol; it's just not feasible for us financially to do that for just a few acres. So, you really do have to become inventive. We use a corn binder to cut it down, but of course, we do have a lot of wind. This year, we did have a couple hurricanes that came in, and even though we're not close to the coast, that wind really picks up in Kentucky, and those sorghum stalks just lay right over. They're very top-heavy. Then we come through, we have to cut it all down by hand. That takes a lot of work. So, typically what we'll try and do is, when we know a big storm's coming—or whenever we can—we'll use the corn binder. Because, otherwise you're, by the end of the season, your shoulder's gonna hurt. It's a lot of work, cuttin' down those stalks. Then, as far as stripping goes, we will strip all of our stalks by hand. I've noticed

this the fastest, however, my grandfather has created a stripping device. He actually took two wires, basically, some very thick wires, and made a hole through a piece of wood that he's got mounted right now. When he takes the stalk through, it'll actually pull those leaves off and allow it to strip. He likes to do that. I've just been doing it by hand. I would say the device is probably easier on your body, but me being the person I am, I know I can get it done faster just stripping 'em off. I'm young, so it's fine. When it comes to us even stripping and putting a big pile of sorghum, we've created almost like a little bed that we allow the sorghum to be able to hang in, because picking all those stalks up off the ground is hard to do. It's very heavy, and usually I don't get very far with it. If I try and pick up a big bundle of stalks, they end up falling. I end up having them all bunched up. They're going every direction. That just makes it harder when we're trying to feed the mill later on. So, by having this little bed that we've got them in, we'll actually just put them in there. They'll lay flat. And then I can take a reasonable amount, put 'em right by the mill. We've actually got it laid out to make things easier on us. We try and have our mill and our buckets where we'll keep the juice very close to each other. This year, we even have a pump that'll go from our mill and the little basket down below to where our barrels are. So, our barrels will hold all of our juice for us to be able to then put into our cooking box. So, we have a thing over top to strain that juice, as well as the pump that it's going through has a strainer, too. We drain our juice several different times before we ever start cooking it. We want to make sure it's very clean and sterile, so we'll do the best that we can to sanitize that. So, it'll go through the pump, and then it'll go through a really nice cotton sheet that we have that'll allow for some of that debris and things to come out. As far as when we're kind of grinding the stalks, we have a mill that's ran off a PTO shaft

on a tractor. There are a lot of different sorghum mills out there. The horse-drawn ones are awesome, 'cause they're very much old-timey, but they are not as fast. When you're kind of in a time crunch, you want to make sure that you can get those stalks ground up and, with us, there's only two of us on the weekends, so we've really got three days to get things done from start to finish. So, every week, that's what we'll do. Three days, start to finish. Our mill right now, we have just gotten a horizontal mill where we can put in the stalk, and we've actually noticed this mill in particular works a lot better. The way it's set up is just very, very nice. It's really outstanding mill that we were able to find. We have quite a few, though, that we've used in the past, so we had another PTO shaft-driven mill, but it had these little teeth at the top of it. The problem was, if there were too many stalks in there, we'd have teeth break off. So, we had that happen several times until the mill just kind of decided it didn't really want to work for us anymore and we were gonna have to do some work to it. So, then we brought out my grandfather's old mill, which was a horse-drawn one. We didn't have a horse. So, we were driving it with a lawn mower. I was driving around in circles. Grandpa did not want to be the one on the lawn mower, so I got that job, and we had to feed the stalks in that way. So, there are a lot of different things that you have to think about when you're getting started. You have to think about what happens when a mill breaks. What's gonna be the best mill to buy. They're expensive to purchase, because it's hard to find sorghum mills. It's not something that's very common for people to do anymore. So you have to really do your research about it. Another big problem that you run into, especially with equipment, is a lot of people who have done sorghum in the past, they haven't necessarily done the best job of keeping their old mill clean. Or they haven't done the best job of making sure it's still working. So, if

you're in the process of buying a mill and you go look at it and you notice it's been laying in a barn for a long time, you might as well go ahead and say, you've got a lot of work to be able to loosen up all the bearings and different things inside of it. So, thankfully, Grandpa is pretty good at all the mechanics. That's what he did in the National Guard for a long time. He worked on big tanks. He has not taught me all of that just yet so, as of right now, I just cross my fingers and hope that I never have a big mill problem. But luckily, with this new one, I don't think we're gonna have one any time soon.

[00:45:42.23]

Annemarie A.: That's good. Now, is it an antique mill?

[00:45:45.06]

Kaitlyn E.: Yes, so it's an antique sorghum mill. Actually, all of our mills are antique. They're very old, but they run really well.

[00:45:55.18]

Annemarie A.: That's cool. What is it called?

[00:45:58.14]

Kaitlyn E.: This one in particular, I can't think of the name of. I can get back with you on it at a different time. We have a few different ones, and I want to say they're all the same brand, for the most part. This one, I want to say it's a little bit older than the one that we had to begin with. There's not a whole lot of horizontal mills out there, the way this one's built,

at least. So, they're a little bit harder to find, so when we found it, we jumped on it very quickly.

[00:46:30.23]

Annemarie A.: Sounds like it. In the process of cooking, so, you kind of brought this up to the juice kind of running into the pan. Could you describe the process of cooking for us?

[00:46:44.29]

Kaitlyn E.: Yeah. So, once we get our juice, we will strain it again right before we put it in the pan. Then, we actually put it on a cooking box. We cook ours over an open fire pit. A lot of people will do it different ways. Some will have boxes that actually have little troughs down in them, or they cook on evaporator pans. Ours is all over basically a fire pit, is what it's like. So, we put our box on top. We'll start the fire down below. The juice starts out as a light green color. As you start to begin cooking, you'll start seeing a lot of dark green spots that will kind of come up. They almost look slimy, is a good term for it. What that is, is that's excess plant material that I talked a little bit about with the leaves. So, the excess plant material gives it that bitter taste. Then you'll actually take what we call a sorghum skimmer and you'll skim that off the top. So you want to make sure, as you're kind of cooking the sorghum, that you're skimming at the same time. For the first probably thirty minutes of cooking sorghum, just kind of stand around. You're close to the fire. It feels nice—unless it's hot outside. Then, once that thirty minutes happens and those skimmings start to come up, you're skimming the sorghum for a long period of time after that. The way we cook underground, we're able to control the heat pretty well. Not

as much as if we cooked with a propane or something like that, 'cause we still cook with wood. But we typically can get sorghum done in about six hours. So, not too bad. But we are constantly skimming. We have noticed this year, with us having that extra pump and being able to strain a little bit more, the skimmings aren't as bad. So, the more times that you can strain before you get it in there, the less work you're going to put on yourself while you're cooking. Then, once we get to a certain point—typically around that five-hour mark—you will start to notice a distinct change in the juice. The whole time you're cooking, you should see that the juice is kind of slowly cooking down. You'll notice that the levels are dropping. You'll kind of start to get this smell that smells a little bit more similar to what sorghum is supposed to smell like; what the natural smell of the syrup would be like. Then, at that five-hour mark, you really start to see a lot of changes. You want to make sure that, when you're cooking it, if you look down at it and you're getting close to that five-hour mark, that it's turning into a golden color, but also that you see these golden bubbles. The golden bubbles are the best point to be at, because that means you're getting closer to being finished. You've got little tiny ones that'll come up for a little while, and then they'll just get bigger and bigger and bigger. We cook till about 227, I think is the correct temperature. That's been a little off this year. You can gauge based on what the sorghum looks like, what it smells like, and then our brix reader. So, we will take a little bit of that sorghum off the pan, we'll stick it on the brix, and we'll be able to tell then, is the sugar content high enough? Sometimes, it's an art, really. Sorghum is not something like just putting cookies in the oven for a little while. There's not like a fourteen minutes and it's done, certain temperature. You really have to test the waters a little bit. So, I say 227. That's ideal. Sometimes, we get to 225 and you start to smell it

and it smells like it might be burning. When it does that, you pull it off almost immediately, 'cause the worst thing you want is for sorghum to burn. Sometimes, it gets to 227 and you check it on the brix reader and it's still at 75 and you let it cook a little bit longer to build up that sugar content. It really depends. Every cooking cooks off a little bit different. Because of that, every cooking we have will taste different, too. Once, next year, we're actually working on cooking with propane. We think a little bit of that will change. But, at the same time, I'm gonna miss cooking on wood a little bit. That's one of those things that is kind of antique; not a whole lot of people continue to cook with wood or continue to cook on a fire pit. That's something we do, but it also can be a little bit challenging, to cook that way.

[00:51:09.25]

Annemarie A.: I bet. Definitely. So, is there anything else you want to say about . . . like, processing or producing sorghum syrup?

[00:51:25.05]

Kaitlyn E.: As far as making the syrup itself?

[00:51:28.17]

Annemarie A.: Yeah.

[00:51:28.28]

Kaitlyn E.: And just kind of getting to that point? As far as processing goes, the only thing that I would stress is that it's a very long process, right? So, I talked about cooking. It's about six hours. Usually, I like to say six to eight, because sometimes you get to that point of six hours and the juice just has not been cooking. When we cook with fire, that's part of our issue. As far as cutting goes, if we use the corn binder, it won't take us very long at all. If we end up cutting it by hand, you usually have about four hours invested of just you whacking at stalks. Then, as far as stripping the stalks go, we've got another two to three hours invested. Grinding, we've been able to get it done in two this year; it used to take us four with the old mill, right? So, we're constantly making improvements to kind of lower that time, but even when you look at it, that's just twelve solid hours of working on the farm to get to that syrup. That's not bottling and labelling and selling, that's just getting there, right? So, it is a very large amount of time that you invest in the product. That's what makes it into an art, really. You spend all this time, and you really check the sorghum while you're cooking it. You really spend a lot of time making it the thickness that you want it to be, the sugar content that you want it to be, and you do everything you can to get it to that point. Then, when you bottle it, you get to sell it to different consumers. Not any two sorghum jars that you get will not be the same. The thickness will be different; the sweetness will be different. It's just a very unique product in general because of that. Once we get to kind of the bottling process, it's so nice. You get to sit back and you just get to bottle the sorghum. You get to see this nice, golden color. It's just absolutely the best. Then I get to go out to farmer's markets and start selling it, and they get to see all that. But I really just wanted to hit on the fact that it is very time-consuming, 'cause I think one of the things that really draws consumers away from it is

just kind of the money aspect. Or not consumers, but future producers, away from it, is the money aspect. It costs a little bit to get started. But then, if there's another thing that draws them away, it's the time aspect. It's a very labor-intensive crop.

[00:54:00.06]

Annemarie A.: That's the truth. That's what it seems like. I kind of wanted to shift and talk a little bit about you and your kind of education, too. My question is, you are a young woman who's chosen a degree and a career in agriculture. Why'd you decide to go down that route?

[00:54:22.13]

Kaitlyn E.: I just absolutely love farming and being outside since I was a young kid. It's just something that I really enjoy. Once I got into high school and I started getting into an ag classroom there, that continued. In fact, I think it even grew, because now I was getting to learn things that I never knew about what was going on outside. And what was going on in the environment around me. I've always been fascinated by those things, as well as, I've always been fascinated by getting to grow something of my own. Right now, I, of course, work at a pre-school, but even before that when I was in high school, I would go out to elementary schools and teach. That's another thing that I'm very passionate about, is teaching. So, you would ask kids, "Where does your food come from?" And most of the times, the answer that you get is, "From Mom and Dad," or "From the grocery store." Right? Kids are very kind of driven away from agriculture. In fact, if you do your research, most people are about three generations removed from ag, so they may not

know absolutely anything about where their food is actually coming from. That was something that I loved to learn about, was where my food's coming from. I liked to know about what's going on in the soil, what's going on in the plant. For some reason, I loved to learn about plant diseases. Couldn't tell you why. But I find it to be fascinating to know all the different things to make sure you get the perfect tomato, the perfect ear of corn. Or, in our case, the best sorghum syrup that you possibly can. That's what drew me in to kind of getting involved in ag, is just that love for, particularly, plants and food. I do love animals, too, but a lot of people who know me know that, when it comes to me picking classes at U.K., I will pick a plant class over an animal class any day. One, because I like to learn for sorghum reasons. I like to learn about that kind of stuff so I can bring it back to the farm. But two, there's just something about plants that I've always enjoyed. They're very therapeutic; they're fun to get to work with. I've just stuck with it. It's always been in me, I don't know.

[00:56:39.05]

Annemarie A.: That's great. Do you ever—I mean, what are the challenges of being a woman in agriculture, where it's like in a more formal setting at the University of Kentucky or in other academic contexts, as a young woman in Gravel Switch? What are the challenges?

[00:56:58.24]

Kaitlyn E.: The nice thing about at the College of Ag at the University of Kentucky is, there's a lot of women here. So, you don't feel singled out. But when you go to the other side of campus, where students aren't as involved in ag, they sometimes give you looks when

you come in with your dirty boots or when you come in straight off the farm or when you talk about sorghum or you talk about those kind of things, because they don't understand it, usually. But also, it can be kind of hard because you're a woman who's doing a man's job. People sometimes will tell you that. For a while, it kind of hurt my feelings. But now, I'm like, "Yeah, I am a woman doing a man's job." As I've gotten older, I've gotten to a point where I've realized that it's time for the world to realize that there's not a man and a woman's job. It's just if you want to do it, that's something that you're passionate in, then you should be able to. There are some limitations, though, to being a woman in ag. One is, sometimes people don't take you seriously. It can be a problem, if you're going up for a job against another man who's in agriculture. You could have the same exact background, but if he has that typical farmer look about him, he's got a little bit better chance than you. And you know that going in. But I think a lot of people are getting a little bit more accustomed to the fact that women are in ag. It's people who grow out of their way, like the *FarmHer* show and different things like that to show you, "Women can do those jobs too, and they're doing them just as well." But I, even when I was in high school, I will say, FFA, all my friends that were in FFA, they never blinked an eye at the fact that I farmed. But other kids who were in high school with me sometimes would snicker and all those good things about, "That's what Kaitlyn does on her weekends. She farms." You know? Like, "She's not able to hang out with us. She can't go to the football game. She can't do this and that, 'cause that's what she does." They would think it wasn't cool, you know? As a high schooler, you're like, "Man, what I find to be the most awesome thing in the world, they think is so stupid." Then, the older you get, I've just gotten to a point, I don't think I care. I love it so much that that's what I want to

do. As far as being a woman goes, I've always told people who have thought about getting involved or have been worried about, "Oh, I don't think I want to get a career in agriculture because I don't want to be doing a man's job," or "I don't want people looking at me a certain way," to go ahead and do it anyways. Because once you get involved, you're gonna realize that a lot of people don't look at you the way you think they do. In fact, a lot of times, people are kind of proud of the fact that you are a woman who's doing a job that was stereotypically a man's job, and you've learned to do it extremely well. The only thing I've found to be super challenging for me is, there's not—being a woman, I've not had a lot of experience working in equipment. Right? We've talked about that a little bit with my grandpa. There's not a whole lot of beginner-level classes. Most of these guys that I'm in school with, they've been workin' on tractors with their dads, they know about this kind of stuff. Whereas I come in with very little knowledge of equipment. Then you also have the physical limitations, right? Being a woman, we all know, we have to work a little bit harder to get those big muscles that the guys have. When you're out of the farm, you need those. So, you do have to really get to a point where you're like, "I'm gonna do this." And it may take you a little bit longer to be able to do it sometimes. I still am like, "Grandpa's haulin' just as much as I am, and he is in his sixties now. I should be able to do more." You have to realize, that's just your make-up. But I think it's empowering to be a woman in agriculture right now, and we are almost switching to the fact that, when we-- I went to FFA National Convention last week, so this used to be a male-dominated organization. I go this year, there's girls everywhere. Absolutely everywhere. And it just makes you feel good inside. Other girls really want to do what I'm doing.

[01:01:23.19]

Annemarie A.: That's awesome. That's really great. And I have a question, too. So, what's the future for Poorhouse Sorghum? Where do you see this going in the near future and also kind of in the farther-off future? What do you want for it?

[01:01:42.06]

Kaitlyn E.: So, in the near future, that is always changing. Because class schedules, different things going on in life. But in the near future, we are hoping to expand how much we're growing. We're hoping to expand who we sell to. 'Course, we're possibly hoping to expand even what products we offer. I've been anxiously trying to get into making a sorghum flour for a long time, too, 'cause the seed head, actually, is awesome for flour and it's gluten-free. Right now, I have a roommate that's gluten intolerant. She actually uses sorghum flours. So, I've become kind of passionate about that. I'm like, "Yeah, we should do something for people who can't have gluten." But those are some of the few things that we're really trying to get going, as well as like this year. We're switching from using wood to using propane. We're still kind of, even though we're eight years in, we're always thinking of, "Okay, what are some things that we did when we started because we didn't have the money or we didn't have the resources that we can fix now?" And that's where we are, you know? We're trying to keep making things easier on us. We're trying to kind of invest in the business, so that in the future, in the later future, I've got things set up. I can go out, and the hope is that, one of these days, if I had to, I could do it by myself. Obviously, I want to work with my grandfather as long as I possibly can, but we all know there comes a time when Grandfather's probably not going to want to be out

there all the time. So, because of that, I really want to get to a point where I've learned everything. I've learned how to work with the equipment. I've learned how to lessen the load on myself, maybe even, how am I going to get the stalks from this end to the other without me having to carry them? Just little things like that, to where, in the future when I do start doing things by myself, we can expand the business more. I'd like to continue making syrup because I love it, but I want to be able to make more of it and sell to bigger stores, bigger businesses. And I've always said that, maybe one of these days, I'll have my own little farm-to-table restaurant. Like it's just been one of those things in the back of my mind. But, of course, I'm going into school to teach right now. But if you think about it, teachers can retire early most of the times. So, I want to teach up until a point when I finally hit my retirement age, and then I want to solely be involved in sorghum. And I've said that for years. By the time I'm fifty, that's what I want to do all the time. I don't want to be in a classroom anymore; I just want to be out in the field. I think that is my overall end goal, is to get to a point where I'm one of these bigger producers. If you've ever gotten to go out and see Danny Townsend, who is also in Kentucky, or you've gotten to hear about his business or see him, he produces masses of sorghum. He sells them to every place you can think of. That's kind of where I want to get to—maybe not the same demographic, but I think there's a lot of different things out there that haven't even been thought of that you could do with the product that I can hopefully reach at that point. But every year, we're growing a little bit more. My hope is, also, when I get out of school, I'll have a little bit more time. It won't be Kaitlyn working jobs and going to class, it'll be just Kaitlyn at work and then Kaitlyn out in the sorghum field. So. Lots of big things coming up, hopefully.

[01:05:15.13]

Annemarie A.: That's great! That's great. I have one more question for you, and that is, why is it important that this tradition, that this kind of foodways, this art of making sorghum, why is it important that you continue this tradition?

[01:05:37.12]

Kaitlyn E.: I think for me personally, it's important because it runs in the family. It's something that I have a lot of memories attached to. It's something that my grandfather wants to continue carrying on. I've gotten to a point that I love it so much, that I don't want to stop. As a whole, though, I think it's important because sorghum is—it's an awesome product. I mean, no one can deny that. It's really neat. It's very versatile. But also, there are lots of things that we used to do in agriculture that have been lost. Right? And sorghum's at one of those points right now where we've got a lot of older producers, right, and if there's not people like me who are gonna learn how to continue on producing, then we're gonna start losing a lot of that history. We're gonna start losing a lot of those things that we used to do. Then, eventually, some of these crops—they'll always come back up, right? So, things that we did in the past will always come back up, except when they come back up, there's a lot less equipment, there's a lot less knowledge on them. And people are havin' to dig around. Whereas, right now, we're at that point. We're at the point where we can either go far with it, which I think is what we're in the process of doing, or it might start dwindling in the next few years. So, I think now, especially, is the time where we really need to hone in and let people know what we do. What sorghum is. Why it's important. It

is an all-natural sweetener. So, anything you use sweetener in or sugar, you can use sorghum to sweeten, as well. It's just fantastic. I love the taste of it, and that's another thing. It has a unique flavor that nothing else has. I would hate to get to a point where you're having to search extremely hard to find a bottle of good sorghum. Right now, it can be a little difficult, depending on where you live. In fact, that's one of the main comments that I get on my Etsy is, "I've been looking for sorghum in my state or in my county for so long, and can't find it." That taste brings back memories. That's something that people crave. So, my hope would be, if we continue to build and we always have sorghum around, then there's gonna be other people like me who are like, "I had that as a kid, and I may not have liked it, but I'm gonna try it again, because it reminds me of so-and-so." So, I mean, I just one hundred percent think it's important for us to keep sorghum around and continue producing, and hopefully more young producers will get involved in it.

[01:08:12.02]

Annemarie A.: That's awesome. I don't have any more questions for you. Do you have anything else you want to add?

[01:08:18.08]

Kaitlyn E.: Not that I can think of.

[01:08:19.18]

Annemarie A.: Okay, thank you so much.

[01:08:21.03]

Kaitlyn E.: Well, thank you.

[End of interview]