

Adrian Wright and Ashley Wright

Where: Dem 2 Brothers and a Grill

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Interviewer: Aaron Henkin & Emily Hilliard

Transcription: Emily Hilliard

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Adrian Wright is a Charleston native and owner of Dem 2 Brothers and a Grill barbeque restaurant on the West Side of Charleston. Adrian is a former pro football player with the New York Giants and Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Ashley Wright is a native of Tampa, Florida and Adrian Wright's daughter. She is the general manager at Dem 2 Brothers.

The Wrights were interviewed by producer Aaron Henkin with Emily Hilliard as part of the *Out of the Blocks* podcast's two episodes on Charleston's West Side. Learn more:
<https://wvfolklife.org/2020/01/17/out-of-the-blocks-podcast-highlights-charlestons-west-side-west-virginia-folklife-hosts-listening-party-february-12/>

AW: Adrian Wright
AH: Aaron Henkin
AW: Ashley Wright
EH: Emily Hilliard

Adrian Wright 0:00 Adrian Wright, Charleston, West Virginia. We on the West Side of Charleston, on Delaware and Virginia. Dem Two Brothers and a Grill.

Aaron Henkin 0:10 Tell me the story of how this place came to be.

Adrian Wright 0:12 Well basically I came home for a wedding, my best friend-- come home for his wedding. And I got with my mother and I seen she was having problems. So, she had dementia and so we just, I started--had me a grill and a hotdog cart, put it on this corner over here. And the rest is history! It just took off from there. Stayed out there for two years, cooking in snow, rain didn't make no difference. I was out there. And you know, a lot of people kept asking me, man you gonna cook in the winter? I said yeah! I said, you eat ribs in the winter? So we took that and we ran from there. I got the building across the street and a food truck, basically and it took off from there when the Food Network came down and interviewed me. It was Southern Fried. No, was it Southern Fried that was here? And it was Paula Deen's two sons, Jimmy and Bobby Deen. So they took off from there. And we outgrew the building we had across the street. And this was a restaurant and we moved over here, so been over here about five years now.

Aaron Henkin 1:27 Let me rewind to... you say you came back here. Talk about like where you're from originally, where you grew up, what you're... sort of like what your childhood was like,

Adrian Wright 1:36 Okay, well I grew up right here in Charleston, West Virginia. Lived up in Works Avenue that they call The Holla. And went to school, last of seven boys. One girl. I'm the baby boy of 'em all and played a little football in high school, one year played basketball. Didn't go to college and a gentlemen came to see me-- he was director at the community center. He seen me, he said man, why you ain't playing football? I told him my story and basically he got me a full ride. The coach came up to my job-- I was driving a fork truck for Sony Warehouse. Came gave me a job. I mean a scholarship and had never seen me play a down of ball. Ended up winning Player of the Year at Virginia Union. Went in the draft, didn't get drafted and I signed with New York Giants. And then I caught on with the Buccs, I was with the Buccs for three years. Stayed down there for 26, lived in Tampa. Moved back when I came home and see my mother--I never went back! I called my kid and told 'em that I ain't coming back. I'm gonna stay here. So, that's when... I had brought a grill to my mother's house for her 70th birthday. And I started cooking on that grill right out here on the corner. So that's how it went.

Aaron Henkin 2:59 So, so you had a... so you had a professional football career. And then you were living down in Florida. And you came back here because a friend was getting married?

Adrian Wright 3:10 Yeah, my best friend David Brown was getting married. And I was the best man in the wedding. And like I said, my uncle asked me to stay and cook for the family reunion. So I stayed and never went back. Just stayed here for a year before I went back to Tampa and I finally got my clothes and I got all my stuff and it just took off. I enjoyed it, you know. I lived in Florida, traveled, did a little bit of everything but you know my mother was sick. Came home. Matter of fact, she's still living! She's 90 years old. Just turned 90 in August. And she lived with me and I take care of her so... Aaron Henkin 3:51 Tell me the story of like, how you learned to do barbecue. What do you... What's your culinary

background? Adrian Wright 3:57 None. I learned from my father and my mother. Used to help them cook all the time. My father used to grill, barbecue and do everything. So as a kid I loved to cook and I'd be in the kitchen with my mother even though I played basketball, football out, but you know I loved cooking. And never did go to culinary school or nothing. But it helped me pay my way through college. You know when you're in college, you need a little extra money. So I should to sell barbecue to the football players and everybody on Sundays. You know, so it just something I loved to do. This ain't work to me. This is fun. It ain't work. I can do it all day.

Aaron Henkin 4:37 Tell me about... let's get down to business and talk, talk barbecue style, barbecue recipe, barbecue ingredients in as much as you're, of course willing to share.

Adrian Wright 4:50 Yeah, basically. I don't know what style it is. You know, people got North Carolina. They got Memphis. They got Kansas City, I just call it Bay-style, you know, Bay is my nickname and the way I cook. I want it to be just like my mother or anybody cook, I wanted it all to be good. So I take my time at it, I put pride in it. So you know, it's just my recipe ain't nothing hard. The only thing we smoke around here is brisket. Everything else I cook straight over to heat with wood and a little coal. My brisket is about a 12-hour smoke on a slow day, you know, so then, you know, we grill our ribs, we grill our chicken, I grill the pork butts. But, you know, I go through so much meat. So smoking ain't the best thing for me. But, you know, my father never did smoke. So I don't do smoking. You know, it's just, I took my own style and turned it in, you know, even from making the collard greens, mac and cheese, you know, we got sweet potato casserole, all this stuff it's just putting your love in it. You know, every time somebody come and want to get hired, they want to change my recipes. But if it ain't broke why we change them, you know, so.

Aaron Henkin 6:11 Talk to me about what it was, I mean, talk to me about what it was like to kind of re-embrace your hometown. I mean, I know you're really plugged in around here and really care about the well-being of the people around you. Just talk about, talk about your relationship with this place.

Adrian Wright 6:32 Charleston, West Virginia is very slow. So I had to knock it down a notch from being in Florida (laughs). But the community took in, embraced me because I came in the community and I reached out to help young kids-- give them you know, bikes for Christmas, toys, you know, feed families for Thanksgiving. You know, we had that big flood in 2014. I want to Clendenin and fed 1000s of people, you know, and they asked me, Why am I here? You're not from up here. I said, but I'm a West Virginian. It could have been me. You know, cause Clendenin was mainly, it was a white--a lot of white people live up there. And it was a different thing. I was the only Black guy out there giving away food and they wanted to know why. I mean, West Virginia is a friendly town. Everybody speaks, you know, we don't have a lot of racial things going on. But it's just hey, if you're West Virginian, you're with me and I'm with you. So my growth... and coming back here. You know, you can see in the blessing of you know, I got two food trucks, a food trailer, never been loaned a dime didn't have a whole lot of football money. Just all from my staying with it and hustling, you know, making it happen.

Aaron Henkin 7:57 You've obviously given a lot to, you know, the neighborhood, the city, West Virginia, talk about what this, what it's given you to be back here. Talk about how it's changed you as a person to be able to come back home and reconnect in this way.

Adrian Wright 8:16 Well, basically, you know, like I say, the main thing was taking care of my mother. I didn't know how far this thing was gonna go. But the embracement of the community, the town. It makes me feel good when people know who I am. You know, like I tell them football didn't do nothing for me. I made football. I didn't have no whole lot of money because I played with the pros. But the love and the caring of friendly things in West Virginia-- I was told that this barbecue place wouldn't work over here on the West Side. Because it was basically a troubled area. But the same people that told me it wouldn't work

come every day, you know, and that makes me feel good. You know, I won plenty of awards. We just got an award last night--the Game Changer from Main Street, Charleston Main Street. So that was a surprise, you know? And the respect of other restaurant's owners, you know, that I get, you know, even though we sell barbecue. And everybody got some different. And my thing is just to do the best you can do it. You know, the best thing that happened to me was my two kids moved up here from Florida, Ashley and Braxton, to help me with this business. And it's been a blessing all the way around. So I got my two kids. I got a new wife, Bernadette. I got my mother, and I got--three, four, three of my brothers and two sisters here. So you know and a whole bunch of cousins and uncles and it's been good, you know. Like I told them, I can travel anywhere. I've been little bit everywhere. So if I want to leave West Virginia and go somewhere, I travel! Then come on back. That's what you do wherever you live, you go out, you live somewhere and you do it, and you go somewhere, have a good time, come on back and start over, so to recharge your energy.

Aaron Henkin 10:20 I wonder if you might be willing to say a few words about your dad, about your your, your chapter of the story. And if you wouldn't mind sitting just so I can... There's a little hum behind me. But if you sit over here next to your dad, we could do like this. Perfect. And Emily, if you want to join me and have question, if you have thoughts, questions you want to add to we can... Your dad just set you up with a great segue talking you up. Let me let me ask you to introduce yourself. Tell me, tell me your name and tell me, tell me your relationship to this guy.

Ashley Wright 10:58 Okay. My name is Ashley Wright. I am Adrian Wright's daughter.

Aaron Henkin 11:03 Tell me, tell me how you ended up in the fold of this enterprise.

Ashley Wright 11:09 Um, this is probably the third restaurant that I've seen my dad build. So he's always been into barbecue. Barbecue was kind of like a side hustle for him. And I called him two years ago, and I was just over my corporate job. I didn't want to do it anymore. I was like, Dad, I don't want to do that anymore. So he's like, try out West Virginia. Ever since I was a kid, West Virginia has never been an ideal place to be. (laughs) So I thought about it. I moved up. For his, he actually had a wedding. And I came up and I was just like, well, I'll move up--since your wedding's coming up, I'll move up when you are getting married. And then I guess the rest is history. I moved up for the wedding. I started kind of like waitressing, working in the restaurant. And I just saw things-- I have a customer service background--saw some things that could be upgraded and changed. And that's kind of where I came into play with the restaurant and just decided to kind of like help with the family business. When I was younger, I remember telling him that I did not want to work in barbecue, I don't want to smell like smoke (laughs). So that is one thing that he never really lets me live down. But that was just it. I've seen him do this a couple of times. And it's just amazing to watch how his hometown basically embraced him.

Aaron Henkin 12:24 You guys represent two different generations. I wonder if... you mentioned sort of having mixed feelings about calling West Virginia home and deciding to come here. Talk to me about--were you were you born here as well? No.

Ashley Wright: I was born in Tampa, Florida.

AH: So you were born in Florida. What talk about what... talk about what West Virginia was in your imagination and your understanding as a kid, who wasn't from here, where your dad was from, and what it was like then when you actually came back here.

Ashley Wright 13:00 As a child, it was just boring. I knew I had to come see family, it was like obligatory almost, it's just like you come to your family. It was very gray here. That was... I'm from the Sunshine State. So well, I don't... I wasn't excited about the cold. I wasn't excited about the mountains. But moving here as an adult has kind of given me a different perspective. I've gotten into nature a bit more. I'm no longer a beach bum. So now I like the mountains and stuff like that. I like the scenic things that there are to do around West Virginia-- kind of has slowed me down a bit to give me a little bit of perspective on life and like, just slowed me down to make me think about like, where I want to be next, or if this will be home forever and things like that. So I've enjoyed it. Aaron Henkin 13:44 Let me ask you guys both to just like a lot of people are gonna be listening to this who aren't from, who don't know Charleston. Talk about sort of what the West Side is sort of, like sort of just the dynamics of the city and sort of this neighborhood, what what makes this neighborhood unique what makes this neighborhood special? AH: I mean you can, you know, I know that this neighborhood has challenges too and has had a lot of sort of uphill battles thrown against it as well.

Adrian Wright 14:21 Oh, yes, there's a lot of drugs and everything out here but like in, with my business, I don't let people hang out in front of my business. A lot of people know me. They know I'm no nonsense to that. So you know, you still gotta be aware your surroundings, what's going on, cuz there's a little bit of everybody out there. They're strung out on drugs and just hanging around trying to look for something that they can steal from you or whatever else. So it's about being, you know, who you are. You know, if you don't want to know the truth, don't ask me because I'm gonna tell you the truth. And if, if you do something wrong to me, then you got to deal with me. You know, it's not no threat. No, it's just the way I am. I mean, I'm friendly, I feed anybody, if you hungry, if you need some help, I'm gonna try to help you. But don't, you know, take, take try to take advantage of me. And, you know, I didn't grow up on the West Side, I grew up on the East End. But my father lived over here on the West Side, and I had a bunch of cousins live over on the West. So and Charleston, ain't that big, you know, 15 minutes, you can be on one side. And it's not traffic, what they call traffic. So, you know, it's, it's just been good, man. I mean, you know, to build this thing and see it grow. You know, we going in our 10th year now. And like I say, my brother work here, my son, my daughter and my wife, my uncle, couple cousins. So you know, and then a few other people mixed in, you know, so I don't know. Our best thing is keeping everything right here and then traveling and do the-- We do a lot of traveling during the summer from August. I mean, April to October we busy every weekend doing festivals somewhere else while the restaurant is running. So you know, it's just been good.

Aaron Henkin 16:26 Let me ask you. What do you think is the most important lesson about life that you've learned from your dad watching your dad, your dad's experience-- his path? Ashley Wright 16:44 Am I allowed to curse?

AH: Yeah!

Ashley Wright: Okay. One of his favorite sayings, is life's a bitch, and you die. So (laughs) basically like, my take away from that is just like, get everything that you can out of life. Don't, don't lay down, don't sit down, don't just allow life to steamroll you and the things that happen to you throughout your life like trials, tribulations, there's so many things that I can, I can say that I've seen him go through, and just my perspective on him as a man, him as a father, like, they've changed as I've grown up, and it's just like, I think that as human beings, we don't necessarily see our parents as human beings, they're our parents. So it's just like, I tell a lot of people, I was just like, the perspective that I have in my father is that I've seen the maturation of a man. We've been through a lot together, so it's just like looking at, where he's come from, where he's been, and the experiences and things that he's, like, gone through and like to see where he is now. And like how he's just never given up and been tenacious as far as like, business, life. Like, it's

just an amazing thing to watch! And it's just different, definitely a different perspective on basically how I view him as like my dad, and I tell people, I was just like, who I see him as, as my dad and who I see him as, as a business owner is two different people. Like, I've seen so many different things that he's basically gone through. So it's just, it's, it's an amazing thing to watch. And that's the biggest thing that I've learned from his is to like, just persevere, keep pushing.

Aaron Henkin 18:25 I'm gonna give you guys a chance to take my job for me. Do you have a question for your dad, you've always been curious about?

Ashley Wright 18:34 Um, we have a pretty open relationship. So anything that I don't know anything that I've ever thought or wondered, he's never, he's not a sugar coater. So he was always been open. And like, you got a question ask me. And that's always been our relationship. So I don't honestly, I do not have a question for him.

Aaron Henkin 18:54 How about you? Do you have any, any question you want to ask your daughter?

Adrian Wright 18:59 Not really. It's, it's a day to day basis. You know, we are around each other 16-17 hours a day. You know, and that's hard on a parent and children. So is to understand me, she sees it. And, you know, we communicate so well, about life, about business. I mean, you know, I'm not the boss. I'm your dad. I'm gonna say something, you can rebuttal it. And we can talk about it! So then we can weigh it on the table and decide which way to go. Yeah, I put my foot down on her sometimes because my way of thinking: get up early, get it done, and move on to the next-- prepare for what's coming at you 'cause it's gonna come at you. You know, it's like lunchtime coming, it rolls so fast, you got to be ready for it, you know. So with her, it's just, it's great! You know, I don't have no complaints.

Aaron Henkin 20:11 I imagine having a family business can be a blessing and a curse, right? I mean 16-17 hours a day with your family in a workplace environment. That's-- you guys have any advice for people who are thinking about going into business as a family?

Ashley Wright 20:28 I think my biggest advice is to-- you have to separate the two. Like, I love my dad dearly. And I know he loves me, but it's just like, it's a time for business. And it's a time for family. And it's just like, when you are in a family business, it's just like, you have to-- everybody has to be on the boat rowing. Everybody has to be in it. And it's honestly, it's no time for like emotions on your sleeve because at the end of the day, this is how we're all eating. This is how we are all making our money. So it's just like, if you have one weak link, and you just have to kind of like, figure out who the weakest link is-- either help that person or letting them know that like, no hard feelings, I still love you. But it's not going to work in the family business, like it's not going to work for us. So that's kind of the biggest thing that I can advise people to do. And family business it's just like, make sure that you know everybody's strengths, weaknesses, and just try to continue to hold each other down and build each other up.

Aaron Henkin 21:30 Anything you want to add to that?

Adrian Wright 21:32 Well, you know, like I said, I'm no nonsense. I've probably fired about 15 of my cousins, you know, family members, because it didn't work, you know? I am who I am. I can't change it. You know, I mean, so I'm gonna tell you the truth. And you need to be able to deal with it and move on. So family, family, like I say family, it's rough! It really is, you know. They always think they own everything you own. You owe them something. So I tell them all, I don't owe you nothin'! Get out, bye! Doesn't make me no difference, you know what I mean? So.

Aaron Henkin 22:12 I'm going to I'm going to turn the mic over to Emily. You've been listening. thoughts, questions, directions, you want to take the conversation?

Emily Hilliard 22:20 Sure! So you come in here. It's always packed. It seems like I've met some great characters back there in the bar. They-- sometimes the bartender tips off your daiquiri. Who are your customers? Who are the regulars? What's the community around the restaurant?

Adrian Wright 22:40 Well, we got probably 85% of our business is from West Virginia. But we get a lot of people from out of town. We just, like yesterday, there was some people from Sweden. And I said, well how you did you find out about us? He said a friend of mine in Sweden, found y'all and told me we need to come to this restaurant. But they was down here working from down at the stamping plant. So we get a little bit of everybody from you know, across the board. They stop in, this is a main point, they stop and check in and get something to eat and get back on the road halfway. The characters in the bar--it's a little bit of everybody! I mean, we I mean we all get along you know we laughing and joking and they come every day. So it's still a family atmosphere. It's, I don't know, you get one or two that step out of line and I gotta tell them go, get out. Come on back tomorrow, though! I mean, you know, so I don't know. I just I keep it real on the...huh?

Ashley Wright 23:54 I think honestly, our customers are basically our local neighborhood people. We've made a lot of friendships, like we have during like when the legislature is in, we do a lot of catering at the legislature. A lot of local business owners--we have lawyers, politicians, different people that basically like come in and they feel comfortable enough to sit here for two hours and have their business and you know talk to each other, have meetings, And it's-- our customer base is I think very vast but it's just like we've kind of built like a tight knit group of people that like care for us. They love the food and they come and see... like I have one customer David Sadd, he comes in like probably like three or four times a week and he's like one of my favorites. I have three David's and I call them the Daves. So they all have like their own little quirk about what they like about the restaurant and what basically it continues to bring them back. I have one Dave that has like a Dave special. So every time he comes in, we know what he's going to order and stuff like that. Our customers range from like a lot of different walks of life and I think they kind of just know what we're doing here and enjoy the food and that's just kind of what brings them back.

EH: What's the Dave special?

Ashley Wright: The Dave special is-- he's gone on a diet now. So it's changed a little bit. But the Dave special is a pulled pork sandwich, hot barbecue sauce with slaw and then a hot dog on the side, all the way, no onions (laughs). And an iced tea, of course. Aaron Henkin 25:30 While I've got you here, let me have you just, just sort of, just sort of run down the menu. I mean, people come in, people come in for the first time they're sitting at a table. They say, you know, what's good here? What do you got? I mean, what's your, what do you need to let people know about what's, what's, what's for lunch?

Ashley Wright 25:47 I tell everybody everything but I do have my favorites. My favorite meat that we smoke is the brisket. Ribs are a close second. And then my top three sides are mac and cheese-- we actually got on a list for Best Mac and Cheese in the nation-- so we were like on the top 50 list. The collard greens, and then the sweet potato casserole is like dessert. It's to die for so good.

26:13

END OF TAPE

Adrian Wright 0:00 Well basically, we open at 930. So we're taking orders, taking deliveries, then we're getting ready for lunch, I can take you outside and show you the smokers. And thank you for interviewing us.

Aaron Henkin 0:17 It was my pleasure. Thank you guys for taking the time to be part of this project. I'm gonna put this thing around my neck and we'll walk we'll take a walk outside and see what's going on over here so...I'll leave this over here.

EH: Smells so good.

AH: Okay, so I'll follow you. What do we got? Where are we headed? [door swings open] Here let me let me stop you right here. Just paint a picture with words about where we are, what's going on, what people are doing in here,

Adrian Wright 1:00 Basically we in here, she's getting sauce on the sides read. My son is dropping wings. We got all the sides ready-- baked beans, collard green, sweet potato casserole, cabbage, green beans, mac and cheese, potato salad and coleslaw. And we also fry wings. All the meat is out on the grill!

Aaron Henkin 1:22 All right, I'll follow you.

[small talk with neighbors and cooks] Adrian Wright 1:31 So basically what you got here, we got pulled pork on here. We got chicken breasts. We got ribs on here. Getting ready for our lunch rush. This is Ron-- the grill man.

RB: Hey, how you doing?

Aaron Henkin 2:08 What... so most people's backyard barbecue grills are one thing. We're looking at something entirely different here. Talk about with just the size, scale, and just what this contraption is?

Adrian Wright 2:19 Well basically it used to be an old propane tank, been cut into to make a grill. We got two racks. You got the bottom rack, the higher rack, you move the meat up, so it can slow cook. We cook straight over the fire. We use wood and a little bit of charcoal. Oak wood. We have our chicken. I mean, this is one of my big grills. But I got two or three around here I'm gonna show you right around the corner here. Oh yeah.

Aaron Henkin 3:05 [sizzling sounds] Talk to me about volume, quantity. I mean how much food you guys going through on a daily basis?

Adrian Wright 3:11 On a daily basis probably about anywhere from 100 pounds-- I mean we move so much meat around here, it's just too crazy to keep up with, you know. Like when I do all my festivals, we got one event we go through 100 slabs in a day and a half! So we cooking, and we turn all our meat ourselves, so it's not no rotisserie-- you got to flip everything for it won't burn up and you know so...

Aaron Henkin 3:45 So we just walked around into a parking lot behind the restaurant and this is--you've got like an arsenal of vehicles here and mobile grilling units. Talk about what we're looking at.

Adrian Wright 3:55 Well basically this this is my big grill right here. We put 100 slabs on that one. We got a smaller grill that you know I pull out and take to somebody's house. We got another small one. This is my food truck here. We have one over there. This is my frying truck. We be frying it like your mama. That's what--that's what I named that, when I put all, do all my French fries and wings and everything in this one. Yeah.

Aaron Henkin 4:21 You--I mean you're--you must have like a natural born entrepreneurial instinct. I mean, how did you how did you come by that?

Adrian Wright 4:28 Well, basically, my father did, you know, painting and every, did a little bit of everything so I learned as I grew up, but see the thing is, I haven't worked for nobody since 1991. I've been working for myself all that time. So you know and it did good at a lot of stuff that I tried. You know, I had, I had a gym we had--I ran nightclubs and bars and barbecue places and carwash. You know in Tampa they know me as Mr. Clean. So you know, I did a whole lot and never gave up, I just keep going.

Aaron Henkin 5:05 You got a great thing going on here. I'm gonna, I'm gonna walk back to that grill and maybe give you a chance just to introduce these guys that are working back there. And unless--anything else you want to add that I'm missing? Anything I neglected to ask you about you want to say for posterity, about, about life about this place? Any lessons, words of wisdom you want to leave me with?

Adrian Wright 5:27 Never give up! You know, it ain't gonna always go your way. You got to get up, brush the dirt off, keep on going. You know that's what my mother and father told me. If you fall, get up, brush the dirt off. You'll be alright, you know? A lot of people give up too easy on life and different things and they looking for the easy way out. There ain't no easy way. I mean, you got to work. You got to take ownership or something. Like you ain't gonna have nothing, you know? That's what a lot of people nowadays... they don't, they don't want to work, they don't want to do nothing. You know, just want you to give it all to 'em.

Aaron Henkin 6:03 Well, you definitely have your your proof of concept here, man. This is, this is an awesome empire you've created.

Adrian Wright 6:10 Thank you. You know my daughter, she's the general manager now. So they put me out to pasture. They told me dad go sit down (laughs). But I won't. I can't.

Aaron Henkin 6:20 Yeah, I get that feeling. I'm gonna just walk around the corner. I'll catch up with you guys in a minute. Who's this guy?

Ashley Wright 6:45 This is a neighborhood dog. I was actually just telling him about them. He comes every morning. He'll get his food and he'll run off and then like probably around like five or six, dinner time, he comes back and he'll be wanting more food. So...

Aaron Henkin 7:01 You know this dog's name?

Ashley Wright 7:02 I do not know this dog's name. He's just appeared maybe about a month ago.

Aaron Henkin 7:07 And he comes by every day for lunch and dinner, huh?

Ashley Wright 7:10 Yes, it's hilarious.

Aaron Henkin 7:12 And you guys hook him up out here?

Ashley Wright 7:13 Yeah, we just give him-- we have a scrap bucket. So he gets the scraps. He might get a pulled pork bone or a rib bone, so-- and he'll take it and he's like run off, so. He's sweet. He doesn't seem too, too aggressive. So he's a sweetheart.

Aaron Henkin 7:25 He looks very well fed. He's a very well fed pit-bull.

Ashley Wright 7:32 Yeah. (laughs) I think he's got the best meal in town compared to the other dogs.

Aaron Henkin 7:39 Awesome. You want to introduce me to these grill masters over here? You guys want to say hi for this project? We're making a story.... Yeah? Okay here, let me let me have you introduce these fellas.

Ashley Wright 7:48 This is actually Ron, one of my grill guys. He does the cooking Monday through Saturday, actually every day we get here probably around seven, get the grill fired up and he takes the wheel so...

Aaron Henkin 8:03 Come stand, Ron do me a favor, stand on this side because I got this kind of rattling behind us. Let me have you introduce yourself. Tell me, tell me your name. Tell me sort of what an average day of work is like here.

Ron Blanks 8:15 My name is Ron. Average day of work is just coming out here, feeling at home and cooking on the grill. Making good food for the customers in the community.

Aaron Henkin 8:24 You got the rest of the crew working inside and the kitchen--you're outside every day

RB: 8:28 Yeah, in the cold, just getting it done.

Aaron Henkin 8:32 What are the pluses and minuses of having an outdoor kitchen?

RB: 8:38 I don't know. It's just for me, it's just I love cooking so I come out and enjoy myself out here basically.

Aaron Henkin 8:46 You get a great view, you get to meet people walking by while they're I guess... while you're, while you're at work here cooking.

RB 8:51 Yeah all the time. A whole lot more people when it was warmer and since it's getting a little cold, you see less and less people. But they still come by every now and then.

Aaron Henkin 9:01 It gets cold in the winter but I guess you're right next to a pretty major heat source here with the smoker.

RB 9:06 Yeah, it feels good actually warms me up. Keep me crispy all day. (laughs)

Aaron Henkin 9:13 Alright. Thanks for introducing yourself. Yeah. Cool. Do you mind if I just open this up and get just get a little sound of the sizzling what's going on in there? Try not to catch the end of my microphone on fire.

Ashley Wright 9:40 Ribs and pork on there.

Aaron Henkin 10:12 Is that, what do we got back there? A fridge? Is that what's making that? Okay?

Ashley Wright 10:16 Yes, this is my cooler and the other one's a freezer. Adrian Wright 10:19 Okay. All right.

EH: Get some chewing sounds [of the dog].

Aaron Henkin 10:25 Oh yeah. What do we got there? (dog sniffs and chews) This dog has really got it figured out. He's, I mean, he lucked into the best deal in town.

Ashley Wright 11:46 He did! He has the best, I'm telling you, he got the best deal of all the dogs around (laughs)

Aaron Henkin 11:52 He's tearing it up bones and everything.

Ashley Wright 11:55 I'd like to blame it on my brother. This is-- he's the one that feeds him (laughs). I came and I asked him, I was just like, where did this dog come from? He's just like, I don't know. I just gave him food. And I was just like, yeah, he's coming back for food every day, but it's scraps so we don't mind.

Aaron Henkin 12:12 That's a loyal customer right there. I guess you couldn't call him a customer.

Ashley Wright: Yes! (laughs)

AH: Freeloader. A loyal freeloader.

Ashley Wright 12:17 A loyal freeloader. Yes. (laughs) Aaron Henkin 12:21 That's awesome. I love that this is all happening outside like right on the sidewalk. I mean, you just get to see the world go by when you're out here cooking and working.

Ashley Wright 12:35 Oh, yeah. We get, we get a lot of characters. You meet a lot of people. A lot of that...sometimes the customers will park just because parking is kind of crazy here. You get some customers that will park by and they'll want to see and like open the smokers and see everything before they get inside to eat. So it's pretty cool. It's pretty cool.

Aaron Henkin 12:53 Smart advertising to have the whole neighborhood...

Ashley Wright 12:57 The best smelling corner in Charleston!

Aaron Henkin 13:01 Say that again?

Ashley Wright: The best smelling corner in Charleston!

AH: You can't beat advertising like that.

Ashley Wright 13:04 Yes. Perfect advertising.

Aaron Henkin 13:51 Do you mind if I go back into the kitchen again and just get some sounds of what's going on in there? Okay, cool. Thanks, guys.

Ashley Wright 14:01 Probably not too much going on. I think, oh goodness. I everything's pretty much been prepared. Maybe the fryer.

Aaron Henkin 14:12 Okay. Quiet in here, right now. It's okay. So I'm just gonna get a little bit of sound of the room. Actually, would you mind just taking the lids off and putting 'em back on and just telling me what's in each one of these? Actually, we'll just get the sounds of the lids first. Let me have you run down the list of sides. What we're looking at here.

Ashley Wright 14:59 So here we have mac and cheese-- that is our world famous mac and cheese. Baked beans is another fan favorite. We have collard greens. That's one of my favorites. And then we have our to die for sweet potato casserole. It's so good. It has a brown sugar and pecan crust on it. So good.

Aaron Henkin 15:21
What can or can't you told me about the sauce?

Ashley Wright 15:26 Ah, it's a secret. That's what I can't tell you about the sauce (laughs). It's the secret sauce.

Aaron Henkin 15:34 Beautiful. Awesome. Any...we've got some sounds of grill frying out there. We've got some sounds of the lids happening. Let's see what we got going on over here. Oh, yeah, let me get some sound (fryer sounds). Can I ask you to just to talk to me about what's going on here, what you're working on, what we're looking at, what we're hearing?

Worker: These are wings. I'm just pulling them out of the grease. AH: Wings a big seller?

Worker: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

AH: All right. I'll get out of the way. Thank you again for let me wander around in here.

Ashley Wright 17:03 Finding more scraps. A

Aaron Henkin 17:26 You got that one?

[small talk among customers and workers]

Ashley Wright 18:13 Winter snuck up on me this year.

Customer: It snuck up on everybody because it was so hot for so long.

Ashley Wright:
Yeah! We went straight from fall into winter.

Customer: Overnight! Cause you know the other day it was 70 degrees.

Ashley Wright: Mmhm. I know! Last week. Pretend like you're working Ron. I know you're good at that. (laughs)

Customer: That dog's really smart. He knows where to come.

Ashley Wright: He comes for lunch and dinner. (laughs)

Customer: Somebody's keeping him pretty good though. He looks like he...

Ashley: Yeah, he has a nice shiny coat!

Customer: He ain't hungry! He says, I guess I'll go get my lunch! Come right on over here.

Ashley Wright: Probably goes back home, takes a nap and he's like alright, it's dinnertime. (laughs)

Customer: Comes back and forth, checking it out. See what's up. What kind of dog is this?

Ashley Wright: He looks like a pit mix.

Customer: He does, don't he.

Ron: Yeah, he got some pit in him mixed with something else.

Customer: Probably a damned orphan.

Ron: Yeah. Like that rascal I got. Has pit in him. Shepherd. Something else. He's a hell of a dog. Good dog. Smile man, you on candid camera!

Ashley Wright 19:47 When I first moved it was twice a year, I had to go back twice a year. but this year, like this year, I've only gone back once. I'll be back. My sister is actually graduating from college in December, so.

EH: Yeah I was just down there in Tampa for a wedding. What's across the bay?

Ashely: St Petersburg?

EH: Yeah. We were there at that Treasure Island...

Ashley: Yeah (laughs) Yes, yes, honestly I thought about...

(small talk between customers and workers)

Aaron Henkin 20:36 See if you can get a picture of us together (with the dog). Come on around. What are you hiding back there for?

Customer: (laughs)

AH: That's not how this is supposed to work!

EH: If you give him some ribs it'll work!

AH: (laughs)

20:51

END OF TAPE
END OF INTERVIEW