

Kristin Smith Interview  
with Abby Huggins  
June 19, 2018  
Corbin, KY

00:02 AH: This is Abby Huggins. Today is June 19th, Juneteenth, 2018. I'm in Corbin, Kentucky, downtown with Kristin Smith for an oral history interview about food and whatever else we end up talking about.

00:23 KS: Awesome.

00:25 AH: So, Kristin, first, could you just introduce yourself?

00:27 KS: Yeah. Hi, I'm Kristin Smith. Born here in Whitley County. I'm thirty-eight years old. Kentuckian. And, I've lived most of my life here in Whitley County. I grew up in Williamsburg City. To a very well established family in Whitley County. I mean, our family heritage goes back seven generations in Whitley County, Wofford, Meadow Creek, Williamsburg, Highland Park area. And now [Highway] 92 East is where I live. And through the Faulkner's and the Siler-Smith clans as we call them here in eastern Kentucky, southeastern Kentucky. My, just you know, talking about going, just diving right into food. My family, that's how we celebrate. We spend most of the week planning for a big feast, you know. We love to talk about it. Who's bringing what. And then the night before or the morning of, we all start gathering in the kitchen and we have a prep list, kind of just like a commercial kitchen does. We start cooking and then we finally sit together around the table and have a two or three-hour meal. And then we continue sitting at the table and telling stories and remembering when. You know, most of my life, most of my fondest memories is in the kitchen or sitting around the table sharing food or memories of food. And, the some of those recipes and the food that we prepare is food that has been in my family for a very long time. And it's seasonal. So when, for example, sour cherries are a very short season here in Whitley County. When they come in, we always make my great grandmother's sour cherry pudding. And, you don't really hear that. You don't see that on the menus very often or hear people say that. But that's kind of like a once a year we have it maybe once or twice. We go all pick cherries at my uncles and then we make sour cherry pudding. So that's, you know, that's what we do as a family. And that's what we enjoy. And it's not only as a family, but we love bringing people in and celebrating with them. Me at the farm, I love to have farm parties and bringing people in and we roast a whole hog. I think our last farm party we had for Carl Weaver's birthday party. We roasted oysters, which apparently is a pretty common thing here in Corbin. Ronni Lundy was actually telling me that she thought it was amazing that we had deviled eggs with fried oysters on top on our menu and that we must be honoring the tradition. I said, "What tradition is that?" And she said, "Well, you know with the railroad." See, she was so intricately grown up in the railroad culture of Corbin. That apparently, trains would come in with a whole train car of oysters and everybody would get some. that was being kind of culturized in this area. So, tons of people were eating oysters like back in the day. So, anyways. We've got a food provider now that's finally coming to Corbin. We're able to get really really good oysters that we shuck ourselves. But anyways, yeah, we have that on the menu as well at The Wrigley. And now I'm able to tell people, "Oh yeah, it's a Corbin tradition. And Ronni Lundy told me so, so it's the bible." But, anyways, just going back to Whitley County and my growing up on the farm. My family has just been very inspiring to me to carry our heritage along. My brother lives in Louisville, he comes back every once in a while. But for me, it was really important to carry the story of our heritage

and the practices of our heritage. I live on the family farm that has been there, pre-Civil War. The land means so much to me. What we raise on the land. I call my herd of cattle the descendants because they are descendants of cattle that I have had, my great-great grandfathers have had on that land. So, it's more than a job or more than a place that we live. There's so much deep history in the soil. And the trees tell those stories. And, doing hog roast and curing hams. To me, I feel like I'm still with my family that maybe have passed because I am continuing doing the practices that they have taught each other. So, to me, maybe the greatest love I can show someone is to roast a hog for them. One that I have raised and that I cook for them. And welcome them into my home. And have a little bourbon and corn pudding or coleslaw. That we all come together and spend the day with.

07:29 AH: Yeah, that's beautiful, that expression of love and care-taking. I wonder if you could talk a little bit more about specific people in your family that inspire this, how you approach food.

07:48 KS: Well, probably first and foremost, my mom. My mother is very different than me. She's more, she approaches food in a very scientific way. She's what I call my pastry chef. So, when I opened my restaurant at The Wrigley, desserts are not my thing. I'm more on the other side of the table. But, she was my pastry chef. But she, for I guess a year and a half, she made all our desserts at The Wrigley. But, growing up, she wasn't always into food. She was a travel agent here in Corbin. And, we, us kids were running around so much that she really wasn't able to keep up with us. So, she decided to stay at home and dad continued working. And, before she knew it, she was extremely bored out of her mind. And, Martha Stewart, this lady that she'd never heard of had come up with the new magazine. And it was out in all the stores or whatever. And so she decided to subscribe to it. And then she just happened to have Julia Child's *Joy of Cooking*. And so she started reading that and decided, well I have this big kitchen. They had just moved in an old Victorian home in downtown Williamsburg. Thought, well I have all this time, might as well learn to cook. And, learn to cook meaning, you know, when she was growing up - and this is the early [19]90s - being proud to be an Appalachian was not a good thing. You tried to shake your accent. You tried to be cultured and civilized. And that, not to say that Appalachians aren't. But we didn't think we were. It's actually quite the opposite in my mind. But, she wanted to be more cultured, even though she lived mainly in Williamsburg. The way she could become more cultured was to read Julia Child's cookbook or to this woman named Martha Stewart's magazine. And so, she started cooking everything in there. She had all day every day until us kids came home and she'd just try all these recipes. And she just really took, I mean, my mother, if you know the mind of a pastry chef, they're very detail oriented. They master something. And so, she just would master things. And, I think the first year we moved into that house, every day, we'd come home and there was a baguette that she's trying to master, right? I mean, it did continue to progress better. But it finally took her crawling up on the top of the roof. Which, our home was three floors. I mean, it was a large home. And it was an old slate roof. And she climbed up there and got several slates off. And lined the oven with that slate to create the absolute perfect crust that a true baguette would need to have. And then, we had about a week's worth of perfect baguettes and then she moved on to something else. But, so you know, that, my mother, Karen Smith, was a huge inspiration and a model of care-taking and hospitality and that's how she shows her love.

12:01 KS: But even before her, my grandfather, every fall going into winter, the garage would start being lined with cured hams. We always cured all our own hams. He raised the hogs and then

he'd have a butcher butcher them for him. He'd cure them all and him and my grandmother would get in there and pack them all and then hang them by pillow sacks. And that was normal. That's just, you know we always raised a garden and we always ate from the garden. It was kind of, it's always been a competition of who raises the best tomatoes in the whole family. And then, we all get together and cook. But, I think it's funny because you asked that question. It's kind of funny because everyone in my, almost everyone in my family is an expert at something. My aunt Wilma's banana pudding and my aunt Linda's roasted lamb. You know I could, everyone is just specialized at - and raising, the specialty in the garden. My aunt Linda raises the best asparagus and go on. I could go on to almost everybody in the whole family. So, I think, to some people, we probably are too obsessive over food. That's all we talk about. But that's just how we enjoy life. We go out of town and we always travel with a cooler because you never know what you're going to run into so you can bring some back. And share it, of course. My great-great grandfather. He was famous for his bees. And so, he had some of the best honey in Bell County. That was Albert Brooks on Greasy Creek. And every, I still run into people, old timers that will tell me about his honey if they know who I am. So, we're very intricately, as a family, woven into agriculture in our region, in producing our own food with pride. And, then, enjoying it by preparing it with old and new recipes. That's important to us. And I think that's important to me in finding my way. And my mark on this region is providing food at The Wrigley that honors our traditions but also honors our adventurous spirit to try new things like oysters. And bring new experiences here for people who need a sense of experiencing a different culture.

15:29 AH: Yeah. So it's a hybrid of tradition and new and different things.

15:33 KS: It is. Yeah. That's a good way of putting it. In the culinary world, we would call it maybe fusion. But I like hybrid, actually much better. Because the hybrid of a plant is actually connected. And I, you know, when I was really, really tackling, developing my culinary toolbox, I would call it. I was living in China. I went over there after college for a few years to do missions and consulting. And, I felt like, you know, there's different ways to experience a culture. And I was of course a student learning Chinese, Mandarin. But I found myself all the time walking into people's kitchens and asking them what that was and what this was and how does that work. And to me, I felt like I learned that the language and the culture through the kitchen in China. So, if you ask me to speak Chinese and tell you how to make a dish, I got it down. I am fluent. But if you ask me how to fix a bicycle in Chinese, I wouldn't know those words. You know what I'm saying? But, so, coming back with that experience, especially during such a pivotal time in my learning stages, coming back to Appalachia, I feel like that is who I am. That's my point of reference and that's kind of like my foundation of cooking is Appalachian food and Chinese food. And so, those are my two comfort foods and when I really, really cook from the heart, it's often with those two hybrids woven together. And, that's why Ed Lee is such a huge inspiration to me. Is because I think he's Korean, right, first. And then, he's really adapted to the Appalachian culture, moving down to Kentucky. But, I feel like I'm Appalachian and then I've been inspired and heavily influenced by the Chinese and Asian cultures. It's just so much unique ingredients that it just was amazing over there. And, the funny thing is, our region on the, what's it called? Latitude lines is about the same as China. So, that's why bamboo can grow so well here. Because they have over twenty-five thousand different species. But there's also other Asian greens that grow so well over here. It's kind of funny. The humidity's the same. But anyways. Other people that you've asked me other people in my life that's inspired me, but I would say, also, just the whole province of Sichuan in China. Friends' mothers that really showed me a different way to love food. And I try to bring that to The Wrigley and to Corbin, Kentucky when I cook here.

19:45 AH: Can you talk more about those foods that you experienced in China? And how you're incorporating them too?

19:54 KS: Yeah. Well, my favorite, absolute favorite is jiaozi, which is a dumpling. Which are kind of becoming really hot right now in food trends in America, in the South. You're starting to see more authentic Chinese food being accessible. But, sometimes we, yeah, we throw in some dumplings on the menu. We do ramen on the menu. Ramen is not super Chinese, but noodle bowls are very Sichuan inspired. We use a lot of Sichuan peppercorns in some of our ingredients and recipes at The Wrigley. So, we'll roast a whole lamb and instead of maybe using a spice mix that's traditional of Mediterranean or Italian, we'll use Chinese peppercorn and anise and those warm spices of Sichuan. And, people don't really, they've never tasted anything like this. So they're not really sure what they're tasting yet. But they love it. And it kind of tingles, it's one of those numbing little tingling sensations and it kind of leaves you wanting to go back for more. So, yeah, I'll often use tacos as kind of like the conductor to be able to stuff it with all kinds of different cultures. And that's what I do on our menus often. But dumplings, and the cool thing about Chinese wraps, wrappers, is you can just stuff it with anything. Granted, I'm a pork producer, so most of the time I'm stuffing it with pork because we have a lot of pork. And we sell a lot of burgers so that kind of off sets the beef count on our menu. But, the Chinese pallet is so inventive in the way they cook vegetables. It's so beautiful. You really, you don't have to eat a whole lot of meat. They use meat to flavor things more than just eat big chunks of meat like we do. So, that's something I've taken away and been able to do. We're huge green bean consumers in eastern Kentucky, right? We love our green beans. So flavoring it, flash frying or dry frying it, and then, the green beans, and then topping it with a ground meat mixture just gives so much flavor to it with garlic and ginger and red pepper flakes. So we've done that a few times. We're excited this year for green beans because we're really going to try to hit that hard. On the menu, let's see, let me think of - that's called gong bao ji ding, or that's the chicken version and then. Oh gosh, si ji dou, that's the green bean version in Sichuan. I'm trying to think of other dishes now that you've asked. We also offer tofu on our menu. And that's going really well. It's really surprising how many people are aware of soybean products now.

24:06 AH: I'm curious how, so you were in China after college. And then what happened after that to get you -

24:19 KS: Here, back here. Yes. So, after college, I went to China for three years and then I decided to do grad work. And so I was looking for a place I could do grad work, but still not in the Bible Belt. I wanted to do my education outside the Bible Belt. So, I found a school up in San Francisco Bay area. It was called Golden Gate Theological Seminary. And then Union University from Tennessee was actually doing a partner degree through them. And so, I was there for three years. And that's when I think I was really influenced by the farm to table movement. You know, Alice Waters being in the Berkley area. The bay area was just inundated by farmers' markets and CSAs. I mean, the food scene is unreal, right. You've got wine culture and wine country. You've got Cow Girl Creamery, Sonoma and all they're offerings. And so, it was kind of hard not to live there and just be swept up by all that going on. I mean, just to experience the San Rafael Farmers' Market blew me away. And I rarely missed it, just even if I didn't have any money, I would just walk the blocks that it was. And so, when it got to the point, my grandfather called me and said that he had cancer, stomach cancer. And he was thinking about selling the farm because he couldn't keep up with it. It just tore me up. And one night, this was like two nights later I had talked to him.

And I had a nightmare, that I don't really remember what the dream is now. That I woke up thinking that it would be one of the biggest regrets of my life if I let that happen. So I called him back and I said, "Is the farm still mine if I want it?" And he said, "Yeah. I'm battling this cancer and there's no one here to take care of it." So, I decided, what's five years in a lifetime, it's a drop in the bucket, right. So, I finished up pretty quickly there and returned home to help him with his cancer treatments and to learn the farm. And he beat cancer. He just died a year ago. But that was ten years ago when he called me. So, I am so thankful that I moved back and was able to have ten more really good years with him. Of course, he died at 91. So, at 81, which, wow, he was 81 when I moved back. He had, I mean, his body was getting frailer and frailer, but his mind was so good. And he was able, I kind of said that I was his hands and feet and he taught me everything I needed to know in my mind. And so, that's what, that's kind of what we did. So, I moved back and after everything I had experienced in California of the farmers' market and stuff, I decided, why can't that happen here in Kentucky? I mean, Kentucky has some of the most fertile soil. And if you can get just enough of a plain, you can grow anything. So, my grandfather and I went round and round a little bit because I wanted to do things more sustainable and he only knew chemicals and the old ways. But it ended up, I started off doing a vegetable CSA while I watched my hundred cattle graze and thought real quick, I need to learn cattle. And that's where the money is. Other people can do produce, but I'm lucky enough to have cattle. So I told him I need to know everything about the cattle and about the pigs. And so, we dove right into that. And he didn't think I'd be able to make much money at farmers' market. And you're not going to make a living, I don't think, at one market. But, it was a huge opportunity for me to market test what my skills could be. And, my family's always been merchants. They've owned jewelry stores and furniture stores. They've always been downtown merchants. So they're hustlers. They're legit hustlers. And so, it was interesting to see this part of me kind of liven up and be like, ok I have this beef, how can I hustle this? And so, I loved to cook. And so I figured, hey, there's no food at market, there's tons of food at the San Rafael market. It was where people were going. So, I decided, well, I'm going to start grilling burgers or making tacos or something unique. And, I would do that, I would do like, I'd use cuts of meat that wouldn't sell real well at market and I would end up making more money on the random briskets that weren't selling. Preparing it in a taco versus a frozen cut. And, so, anyways, that became my shtick. That became my thing. I think for like two years, people would call me the taco lady. They didn't know who I was, but I was the taco lady. And I would sell out every market. And, to me, that started telling me. Ok, this is what these people want. I mean, I'm talking like 300 people would come to the market. And I would sell 300 tacos. And two, I would still bring my Asian flavors. Sometimes I did pork belly tacos and put hoisin on it. And they would sell out and so then that's when I started getting propositions of maybe opening a restaurant. And I still, I was like, I don't know about a brick and mortar, you know. But, I found the right space over here at 207 South Main Street. And it was beautiful and I figured, I walked in there and figured, if I didn't do something here, someone would and I would regret that the rest of my life. So, we, after five years of farmers market, I went into being a brick and mortar restaurant. And, for a year, we built out. So, it took me, it was a good enough time for a whole year for me to really learn as much as I could from other chefs or other restaurants and research what I wanted The Wrigley to be. So, you know, people like Ouita Michel was a huge asset and help for me in knowing what direction to go to. I would go, we would travel to Nashville and Chattanooga and Charleston, Asheville, Louisville, Lexington, of course, Berea, Bowling Green and everywhere I go, I'd research restaurants that could be similar to what my vision of a restaurant here could be like. And then I would ask if I could go into their kitchen and see it. And, only one restaurant turned me down because it was probably at a really inopportune time for me to be in their kitchen, which I totally understand now. But everyone was just so gracious for me to

see their kitchen and to take pictures of their kitchen. Because I really wasn't sure what a low boy was or how a fryer worked. I mean even, I mean, I was green as green could be. But, everyone was so gracious to teach me, or to welcome me into their kitchen and to teach me. And so, I've always hoped that I could be the same way. Because there's no way I could have gotten to this point without people's help. But, I mean, going back to your question, the very beginning, who people in my family that's inspired me. I mean, I feel like I'm a human sponge. I really, I want to soak up everything I can from anyone or any television show or YouTube. I mean, honestly, even this morning, I was watching, what's his name Jaques Pépin? He's a French chef on TV. It's like the PBS. I only get like three channels and one of them is KET (Kentucky Educational Television), right. I love KET because there's no commercials. But, they have these series of chefs that aren't as well known or it's not Food Network. Which Food Network is the worst ever. Early 2000s, great Food Network. Now, it's all about competitions and cutthroat cupcake shows. And to me, that is not what food is about. You know, if you want my opinion about what a food show should be like, The Great British Bakeoff, that is good TV. Because you learn. And that's why I think, and I'll go on a tangent here. That's why I think internet is so important for people to have in their homes or access to. Because people like me that maybe don't have the time or resources to have a culinary degree, but you can teach yourself through YouTube or through the internet of streaming a culinary degree. I mean, I've rubbed two pennies together in the form of YouTube and TV to learn how to set up a kitchen. What a low boy is. I had a guy come and cut a tree down for me at the farm. It was a friend of my friend's husband. And he climbed up this big massive tree. And he was up there strategically trimming it off until there was a stump. And I finally after several hours, he came over near me and I said, "Brian, how did you learn how to do that?" I mean, that's not, he does this in his spare time. And he's like, "YouTube." I'm like, "You learned how to cut a tree like this on YouTube?" He's like, "Yeah." You know, it's just, there's I mean, granted, I think we take for granted as Americans how much access we do have. But there's areas in our region that don't have access. And it's just to me as important as electricity. Or, running water. Because you're not given the equal opportunity that other people are to create a thriving business. Or a career that you wouldn't be able to in other areas. Or you would be able to in other areas, but you get the point.

38:03 AH: Yeah. Sounds like seeking out experts in the field who generously share their expertise. As well as self-education and motivation.

38:15 KS: Yeah, huge.

38:15 AH: To just learn and soak it up. And then, yeah. I do see you trying to pass that on to other people.

38:21 KS: I do try my best, yeah.

38:27 AH: Yeah, let's see, where to go from here. One thing I've noticed, every time I've been to The Wrigley is it feeling, having this community feel of people knowing each other and it being this gathering place.

38:52 KS: Oh totally.

38:53 AH: I wonder if you could talk about that marriage of food and community and how you create that. Or how it exists here in Corbin or however you want to take that question.

39:04 KS: Well, in my opinion, it's definitely something hard to capture. But you can try your best. And we were definitely very thoughtful in the very beginning of hoping that we could capture that. So, one of, so a few things that we were strategic about was making the tables smaller than a standard table. So we brought the table in by two inches on each side so that people were brought a little closer so they would have conversations. We were also strategic in building a community table. So, kind of forcing people to sit with each other. And there was a little bit of resistance in the beginning. But, we stood, and on top of that, we stood strong at that conviction that it was important to us. So, when people would complain, we were like, we love that this is a community hub. We went ahead and just emphasized that that's what we were even before we were, right. But also, and probably this is the most important is that everyone at The Wrigley is welcome. No matter who you are. No matter what your background is. No matter your color, your race, your gender, anything. It doesn't matter as long as you are not hating on someone else, you are welcome at the table. And so, I think that, with all those things together, is helped us at least communicate to the community that if you want it, it's here. We built this for you. And most of the people have been really accepting to that. And receiving of that. And we tell people that even with our marketing strategies that we want to be the place where you celebrate. Or the place that you are starting a new life too. A place that you might want to get engaged at. Or that you say goodbye to with someone. A transition in life. There's a saying on the back of our wall, where the exit sign, it says, "Every exit is an entrance to somewhere else." So, we're also that. If you're saying goodbye or hello. We want to be a place where community just happens and where it's not just eating food quickly and leaving. It's enjoying - just like going back to the table with my family. You come, you visit, maybe you're kind of slow to order your whole meal. You have a few starters and then you're talking, you have a drink or two and then you order your entree. It's fluid. It's not so structured that you don't even have a waiter or waitress. You go up and converse with our employees. And our employees come out to you. So, there's not all of these rules. You know, it's very fluid. And sometimes that's really hard for people to get or to understand or to navigate. But, we feel like it still falls under where our mission is. And it's a community hub and community sometimes feels messy, right. Or, unorganized. Or sometimes just completely open and that's what The Wrigley feels like. There's plenty of space, plenty of chairs to pull up. If it was more structured and say you have a host and you walk in and someone takes you to that table, you feel like that's your table. But, at The Wrigley, every table is your table. You can keep moving around as people come in. And we don't want to stop that. We don't want to change that. We actually want to be different than any other restaurant to encourage that kind of community, that kind of conversation, that kind of celebration or acceptance. Or sometimes hard conversation, right. So yeah, we were very strategic in that. Some of it was more fruitful than we ever had expected. But sometimes, that's what happens when you open your arms so wide.

44:38 AH: When did you open the brick and mortar?

44:42 KS: The brick and mortar was November 2014. Yeah. So, almost four years in November. I can't believe it. And hopefully there's going to be more. More restaurants.

45:00 AH: More places?

45:01 KS: Yeah. That come from me. I hope. I think eastern Kentucky is ready. They're ready for community hubs like The Wrigley. Not only in Corbin, but maybe Williamsburg, Hazard, on

down through southeastern Kentucky, or even more eastern Kentucky. Whether I'm a part of that or not, in one way or the other, that is definitely my vision and my legacy that I want to leave.

45:35 AH: So it rippling.

45:37 KS: Yeah. And I think, you know I wanted to be really careful for my first brick and mortar to not get ahead of myself. So I kind of gave myself like a three-year rule. Like I wasn't really allowed to think about it, talk about it. But now we've passed that three year. We're at three and a half. So I feel like we're stable enough. We've got all the systems in place at The Wrigley. So where I can now devote some of my other time and thought to how that might look if we created more community based concepts that still are farm to table. You know because, what's important about what I do, because you know, some people come in and talk to me about, they have some money to build a restaurant right off of I-75. Because we're right off of I-75. Well that's great, tons, thousands upon thousands of people go through that corridor every day. But there's also fast foods and franchise. That's not my, that's not my thing. To me, my thing is revitalizing downtowns. Using buildings that have unique history, unique structures and bones and stories to those bones. And then breathing new life into them. And then, for it to be so, you're already investing in community when you're doing that because people have connections to, say like the building we're in right now is an old JC Penny's building. So, the community has memories, old memories to that building. But second of all, come, your menu centered around the produce of the local farmers. The terroir of the food that's in that region. So then, you're keeping more and more dollars in the community. You're helping your neighbor and they're helping you. Definition of a community, pretty much. And then, that it is on top of that, built around it being a community hub. So, that's what I want to see ripple across southeastern Kentucky. And I'm starting to do a little bit of restaurant consulting. So, whether it's through that avenue or through me actually investing and doing a restaurant, that's what I want to be a part of.

48:38 AH: Yeah, that's one of my questions kind of was, what is your vision for -

48:42 KS: What's next?

48:42 AH: Yeah. For food in this place or for yeah, however small or big you want to take that.

48:51 KS: I mean, I would love to see, I mean, farming is such a hard business. It is not easy. So, I wouldn't want to create an industry that so many people would be miserable at doing. But at the same time, I want to create an industry and a movement, and such a ripple effect of a tide that allows people to do what they love. And, hopefully, it will inspire more people to maybe go back to agriculture. To feel like they can make a living in agriculture. And, I know several farmers that we pay on a weekly basis at The Wrigley. They're doing well. So, I think, for them to have ties to the farmers' market, to a restaurant and to maybe schools, that would be able to live on that industry. But, I just, I would like to see more working farms. I would like to see us using our land responsibly and with pride. And using some old techniques and using new techniques. I mean, I'm a huge believer in planting by the signs. There is no other way to do it. And I have literally grown a garden by the signs and then right next to it not by the signs because I wanted to be proven right or wrong. And it's definitely, definitely by the signs is a much more productive garden. But, there's also new techniques that allows us to be smarter with our labor. So, I think I would like to see more farms that are popping up everywhere, using our land in a responsibly, environmentally responsible way and then feeding the masses so that we aren't a food desert



anymore. I mean, for us to be a food desert in a fertile land is like incomprehensible, but it's true. So, re-teaching people their heritage, because we have such a strong food culture here. And the food is delicious. Re-teaching people how to cook. I mean, I was at Corbin High School yesterday teaching twenty-five girls how to cook Mexican food. I think we need to be reminded that we have a lot to be proud of and so sometimes we've got to be reminded of that and shown that and then redirected into nourishing each other. So I think that's through food. I think there's so much that food provides. It provides love for each other. Actual nourishment for the body. But also, a place to gather. You know, the church is losing its place as a social hub in some communities. And so, there's a huge void of that. And, you know, the suicide rate's higher, the divorce rate, people are needing community. And they need each other and they need to, things to do with each other. I mean, as basic as all those things sound, that is, it's simple too. The answer is simple. And I think it just takes us hustling a little bit, working, but working together. And eating together. It's just that simple. We make it too complicated sometimes. Right?

53:42 AH: Yeah.

53:45 KS: That's my vision. It's really that simple. And I think it's happening. I mean, places, things like Dumplin's and Dancin'. There's a group of people in Hazard that get together and commune and eat together. Those are little ripples that teach other people and it just starts going and going and going. And it's ok. I'm talking about the long game here. Any change that's going to happen in southeastern Kentucky, it's always going to be the long game. And that's ok.

54:27 AH: Yeah. But it starts with people eating together.

54:29 KS: Period. And talking about it. And not just complaining, but coming up with solutions. And the solution is sometimes just continuing to keep eating together. And cooking for each other, serving each other.

54:55 AH: Well, you've given a lot of beautiful food for thought, so to say. Yeah, just about land and place and family and chosen family. And how that's all wrapped up together. Yeah, and thinking about also, I hear a lot of themes of honoring the old but also being aware of the new.

55:30 KS: Oh yeah, and not afraid of the new.

55:31 AH: Not afraid of the new. Whether that's in farming techniques or dishes or the things we talk about, the ways that we're together. Yeah, that we have to try to exist in both worlds, yeah. But, I'm wondering if there's anything I didn't think to ask that you feel like is important to say about past, present, or future in what is important to you in this place.

56:03 KS: I've never really wanted to be a pioneer of things. It's hard to be a pioneer of things. But for some reason, God has me as a pioneer of many things in my life. And I have no idea why. Sometimes I think that's the thorn in my flesh and He put in. But, it's ok because there is adventure to pioneering. But, I would say, I probably couldn't do everything I do without my wife. And she's probably the best thing that's ever happened to me. And, the cornerstone to everything good at Faulkner Bent Farm, The Wrigley Taproom, and Why Whitley. And I hope that this is a new time for Whitley County and for southeastern Kentucky. To be more accepting of all people. I'll probably leave you at that.

57:25 AH: Yeah. Well thank you, yeah, you're words and you're pioneering mean a lot to people who are following in your footsteps and who are passionate about the same things.

57:40 KS: Thank you, Abby.

57:40 AH: Yeah, thank you Kristin.

57:43 [End of Interview]