

F: [0:00] If you need to hop up, just hop up. We'll pause.

A: [0:04] OK.

F: [0:05] Whenever you're back, you're back.

Q: [0:06] Yeah, just let us know. I'm going to try to move through this quickly. I know you're very busy.

A: [0:09] Sure.

Q: [0:10] Whatever feels good.

A: [0:11] OK.

Q: [0:12] We just like to start with, how do you like to introduce yourself?

A: [0:15] Yeah, I'm Jillian Robillard, Owner of Southern Maine Crabs in Kittery, Maine.

Q: [0:20] Great. Can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up?

A: [0:23] Yeah. I grew up in Eliot. My dad was a commercial fisherman, dragging and gillnetting for most of my childhood. He got out of that for a little bit just because of the quota cutbacks on fish, over regulation by the government. And then from there, a few years later, he ended up getting into lobstering. Worked on the boat a couple times and just decided to open up a crab market.

Q: [0:46] Cool.

A: [0:47] Yeah.

Q: [0:48] You mentioned your dad. What does your mom do?

A: [0:51] My mom was a stay-at-home mom, but she did all the books for my dad. Of course, managed my brother and I, bringing us to sports and stuff growing up. She helped me out with the business. She does all the errands for me, goes to the bank, the post office – everything.

Q: [1:06] That's awesome. You have a brother. Do you have any other siblings?

A: [1:09] Just an older brother.

Q: [1:11] Just an older brother. Do you have any history of fishing in your family beyond your dad?

A: [1:16] No, my dad was the one that started it.

Q: [1:17] Interesting. And is his family from Maine?

A: [1:20] Yes. From the York area – York, South Berwick.

Q: [1:25] Nice. And what does your brother do?

A: [1:26] He works on a lobster boat.

Q: [1:29] Cool. It just keeps going.

A: [1:30] Yeah.

Q: [1:31] Great. You mentioned your mom's history with bookkeeping. Do you have any other family history with bookkeeping, processing, marketing, bait, gear, food service with seafood?

A: [1:42] Not much, no. Most of my family – we're all kind of entrepreneurs. We've all done our own things, but it's been completely separate industries.

Q: [1:50] Cool. And are you married?

A: [1:52] No.

Q: [1:53] Do you have any children?

A: [1:54] No.

Q: [1:55] All right, great. Now, we're going to sort of transition towards questions about your role and what you do right now. I'm curious if you could just describe to me your role in the fishing and aquaculture industry in Maine.

A: [2:06] Basically, what I do is I buy crabs and lobsters directly off the harvesters. So, the lobstermen. The crabs – it's all bycatch in the lobster gear. I take that. I've got holding tanks. We process them. We pack them and ship them live. We sell them retail. We have a few different restaurants that we sell to. We do process them and sell the meat. We sell the claws, both for lobsters and crabs, and yeah, just distribute it locally, really.

Q: [2:37] Cool. How long have you been doing this?

A: [2:41] I've been in business for a little over six years now. I've had the facility for about three years and the retail market for a year.

Q: [2:48] Cool. What inspired you to start doing this?

A: [2:53] Yeah. I was out lobstering with my dad one day, and we're catching quite a few crabs. From there, we took a few home for dinner, and he was telling me that they were really a good seafood. He didn't really know why that there wasn't a local market. I started looking into it, and I ended up buying a truck and starting to buy his crabs. And then it just grew from there, buying other people's crabs and buying their lobsters. It's kind of unraveled.

Q: [3:20] Cool. Were you often out on the boat with your dad? Did you go fishing with him often?

A: [3:25] I tried to as much as I could. Yeah.

Q: [3:28] Nice. Can you talk a little bit about what made you want to continue working in the fisheries in that sector?

A: [3:39] I had always said growing up, I wanted to be a marine biologist. And then through my father's connections and stuff, he was able to get me sort of an internship almost when I was either in middle school or high school, working at the UNH lab in Durham. From there, we did a lot of lab research and stuff. I just decided that marine biology – sitting in a lab – wasn't really for me. I went into college, and I declared a marine bio major, and still just didn't seem like it was the right fit. And then one thing led to another, and the University of New England started offering a marine entrepreneurship program. I ended up claiming that as my major and ran with that. I think I claimed that at the end of sophomore year, and then halfway through sophomore year, I'd started this business, so it just fit in with what I was doing.

Q: [4:35] Wow. You were doing this and college at the same time?

A: [4:38] Yeah.

Q: [4:40] Wow. How did you find balancing those things?

A: [4:42] Freshman year, I didn't have the business. I worked for someone else, but I commuted back into – back and forth from Biddeford every day. Sophomore year, once I had the business, I was living on campus, so I'd go to class Monday through Thursday. I made my schedule so that I had no classes Friday. Thursday night, I'd drive home, get in my box truck, go and get all the crabs, and then, Thursday through Sunday, sell everything I could. Then, Sunday night, I would write checks, put it on the fisherman's boats, and then head back up to school.

Q: [5:12] Wow. How do you feel like – or do you feel like doing those things simultaneously informs your business?

- A: [5:20] Definitely. Yeah, definitely. Being in college and stuff and not full-time working, it let me learn things through school, but also then directly implement them with the business at the same time.
- Q: [5:34] Yeah. Were you learning things, then literally directly implementing them as you were learning them?
- A: [5:37] Yeah.
- Q: [5:38] Can you talk a little bit about what that was like?
- A: [5:41] Yeah. I think the biggest thing for me was – I was taking accounting classes, so we'd have worksheets and stuff. Instead of doing the numbers on the worksheets, I'd just take the numbers off my own books and put it in there. I had a little bit better of an understanding of what was going on financially with the business and stuff like that, as well as business management classes and legalities behind – how to pay the taxes and stuff like that.
- Q: [6:09] That's cool. You mentioned your mom bookkeeping. Was that something that you ever helped her with? Or did that experience sort of inform this in any way?
- A: [6:17] I haven't helped her, but she's definitely helped me with some things. We regularly meet with my accountant and stuff. Anything I don't understand, I just hand off to her, and she figures it out and explains it to me. We work together that way.
- Q: [6:33] Cool. Can you talk a little bit more about your business model, I guess? I'm curious how you get in contact with fishermen, how you get the crabs, what it looks like once they're here.
- A: [6:42] Yeah. One of my biggest things with the business, because there is so much competition in the area, has always been I don't want to be a person that has to solicit boats. If I'm doing my job the right way and paying them a fair price and offering a good service, I shouldn't have to do that. I would never walk up to the captain of a boat that sells their product to another company and say, "Hey, sell me your product." I let them come to me first. I think that's gained a lot of respect. I'm also very transparent with my fishermen. I tell them what the price is that day and I stick to that even if the price drops by the end of the day. I don't do that to them. Then, help them out. If they're in a hard time, if they're getting towed in or something, they can't get in until eight o'clock at night – wait around for them. Just different things like that – having good quality bait – really goes a long way
- Q: [7:35] Cool. So, once the fishermen bring the crabs here – do they bring them here?

- A: [7:40] Some bring them here. Some we drive down to the dock and pick up. We put their name on the crate. We float it into the tank. We don't touch it that day. The next morning, we come in, and we start going through them. We pull out anything that would be dead. We get their live weight off of that. We log all of that down, and then from there, we just start going through our orders for the day, whether it's wholesale orders, restaurant orders, shipping orders, whatever it is.
- Q: [8:10] What do you see most? Do you see mostly wholesale, mostly restaurant?
- A: [8:13] In the wintertime, it's definitely mostly wholesale. In the summertime, I'd say we definitely do more volume wholesale, but we have quite a few restaurant accounts, smaller accounts, and stuff like that that really helps out. I'd say summertime is probably 50/50 timewise, but definitely more volume goes wholesale.
- Q: [8:32] Cool. Do you have a sense of what the crabs are being used for once you sell them?
- A: [8:37] Yeah. So, if a restaurant takes them, usually they boil or steam them, put them on a plate for someone to eat. If they go off to a larger company, sometimes that goes out to a grocery store chain. Other times, they'll process it, and they'll pick the crab for meat, or they'll sell Empress claws or something like that.
- Q: [8:57] Cool. You mentioned good bait. Can you talk a little bit more about that or what you meant?
- A: [9:03] Yeah. So, sometimes cheaper isn't always better. Having a good quality bait – if you're getting fresh stuff, it's in a brine. It's salted well. The temperature – it's kept pretty cold, pretty much frozen at that point. Decent prices. Someone doesn't want to go out and pay \$300 for a drum of rotten fish. A lot of what I do is importing frozen bait. That way, I know the quality is good. I'll stand behind it. That way, they have it, and it's frozen, and it's there's no way it can be rotten. We don't have to salt it. There's no brine to it. It's a lot less messy.
- Q: [9:45] Sure. In terms of bait, what does that element look like? How do you – do people come to you to buy it?
- A: [9:54] Yeah. Typically, when a boat texts me that they're going to be in, say, at three o'clock in the afternoon, they'll say, "Hey, can you bring me three drums of redheads?" We'll drum up the redheads, we'll throw it on the truck, and bring it down to them. We do have some people that don't sell us product, but they do buy our bait, so usually they come here and they pick it up. We just load it onto their truck for them.

- Q: [10:16] Nice. Just thinking about all the different experiences that could be a part of the fishing sector. You've mentioned bookkeeping. You've mentioned bait. Do you have any gear-related experience or any element of that in the business?
- A: [10:30] I try to stay away from the gear side of things. There's a lot to it. Leave that to the fisherman, really.
- Q: [10:38] Yeah, absolutely. In terms of processing that happens here, can you talk a little bit more about that?
- A: [10:45] Yeah. Most of the processing that we do is going to be for restaurant accounts and for the retail market. I'd say, right now we've been processing quite a bit of lobster, lobster meat for the restaurant – summertime, tourists coming in and stuff. Then I'm hoping this summer to get some sort of a second shift going to be able to process crabs during the day and then lobsters at night and just kind of keep rolling with that.
- Q: [11:09] Nice. With the processing, what has it been like to build out the infrastructure and employees to be able to do that?
- A: [11:20] Yeah, it's difficult because once I got the facility, of course, we went into COVID. It was pretty hard at that point, and then it's been hard since then to rebound and be able to find good employees and stuff, especially in this industry. It's backbreaking work, a lot of physical labor and stuff. It's trying to find that happy medium of finding good employees that will have your back, but at the same time treating them right.
- Q: [11:49] Yeah, absolutely. Can you talk a little bit about your experience, or, I guess, maybe thoughts about marketing, especially with green crabs in particular?
- A: [12:00] Yeah. As far as marketing goes, I think our biggest outlet really has been Facebook, sharing to different groups. That gained traction during COVID. And it's really been, I think, educating the public that way, telling them this is what we vocally have, and this is what you would get elsewhere – imported products, really. What was the rest of that question?
- Q: [12:27] I don't know. How do you feel like that's gone, educating people about green crabs?
- A: [12:34] Yeah, I think it's gone well. I know there's quite a few people up in York that take the green crabs and they sell them to restaurants and stuff. I think the hard part is getting people to initially try them, and then from there, it's kind of finding different things to do with them – soups and bisques and stuff like that.
- Q: [12:51] Do you have any opinions about what's like a successful first try for people?

- A: [12:55] Really just getting someone to try it, whether they like it or not. Getting past that initial like, “OK, I’m going to eat this thing.”
- Q: [13:05] Yeah, absolutely. I’m curious. Do you have any experience in advocacy or any community-based organization related to fisheries, green crabs, processing?
- A: [13:14] I do a lot in Portsmouth with infrastructure and stuff, trying to help the fishermen down there get better infrastructure – working hoists, better docks, and stuff like that. I did an internship in college with Gabby Bradt on green crabs, trying to get them to molt in a lab setting. That way, you could then sell them to restaurants as a molted crab and stuff like that.
- Q: [13:38] Can you talk a little bit more about that experience?
- A: [13:40] I’m not sure if I’m allowed to. (laughter)
- Q: [13:43] OK. That’s totally fair. Yeah.
- F: [13:45] Can I ask a question? Most of the fishermen you buy from – are they in Portsmouth? I’m just curious. We’re in Downeast Maine, and we haven’t talked to anyone who’s this close down to the border with New Hampshire. I’m just curious. Are most of the fishermen in New Hampshire? Is a little bit Maine and New Hampshire. Which ports are you servicing?
- A: [14:03] Yep. We have boats that land every day in York, Kittery, Portsmouth, Rye, and Hampton, and then a few times a week, I have a few different wharves up in Portland, where those boats will sell me their crabs.
- Q: [14:16] Is that a lot of logistics work to figure out how to move all that around?
- A: [14:21] Definitely, yes. Yep.
- Q: [14:24] This might be an impossible question to answer, but to your best, or if you can provide me with a couple different examples, what does an average day of work look like for you?
- A: [14:34] Yeah, it definitely – it varies day by day, but usually what happens is, we come in in the morning, we go through all of our product. From there, I write down the orders. They’ll pack out the orders, and then I usually have one or two people out on restaurant deliveries. In the meantime, if we have to process lobster meat that day for restaurants, fire up cookers, and we’ll start processing. Usually, I hop back there and start picking that. Then, come about 11:00 o’clock in the morning or so is when boats start calling me, saying that they need bait, they need to get picked up and stuff. Usually, we’ll take a quick lunch break, and then we’ll pretty much all hop in a vehicle and start driving around to the different docks and

meeting fishermen at their pickup times. From there, we come back. We put the crates in the tanks, we label them and stuff, and then just continue on with the day.

Q: [15:29] Wow. But then, do you have days like this often where you're working in other parts of the of the business?

A: [15:37] Definitely, yeah. Every day, I'm usually more so helping them grade through lobsters, go through crabs – stuff like that. Retail, we do Friday through Sunday. If someone calls out, usually I have to fill in for that, which takes me off the road for the day. I'll definitely be at the shop until about six o'clock tonight when we close, and then probably hopefully get some of my other stuff done.

Q: [16:01] What are your hours for the retail?

A: [16:04] Friday, Saturday, we are 10:00 to 6:00. And then Sunday, we're 10:00 to 5:00.

Q: [16:08] When you're not working in this retail capacity, how long are you here during the day? How long is your workday usually?

A: [16:16] Yeah. If we're just a regular week, not slammed busy, I try to start around 6:00, 7:00 o'clock in the morning. If we are slammed busy, it's usually about 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning. And then, last boat typically hits the dock at 5:30, 6:00 o'clock. So puts us out of here right around 7:00. And then the nights that I have to be on the road at night, sometimes I don't get back until like 11:00 o'clock, midnight.

Q: [16:41] Wow, that's amazing.

A: [16:43] Yeah, it's a lot of work. (laughter)

Q: [16:44] Yeah. What is your experience of that?

A: [16:46] It's fun. You like your job, you never work a day in your life. It's what they say. Vast majority of the days, it doesn't feel like a job. Sometimes, it does get to you, but most of the time, it's really nice to be doing what I do. I think the best part is talking to the fishermen and spending some time with them, hearing their stories.

Q: [17:07] Yeah. Can you talk a little bit about what that's like?

A: [17:09] Yeah. So, kind of lucky that we have still a few older fishermen kicking around. You learn how things used to be done versus how they're done now. You can pick their brains on different things. It's nice. You can contact them for different connections and whatnot and just see what they know.



Q: [17:29] Yeah. Have there been any really big takeaways from those conversations with older fishermen?

A: [17:35] Definitely, yeah. I've learned a lot of who to do business with, and who to watch out for, and different things like that, as well as a lot of what didn't used to work for them – different bait, stuff like that.

Q: [17:51] Yeah. And do you hold any commercial fishing licenses yourself?

A: [17:55] I don't.

Q: [17:57] You don't. I'm curious, how do you think your background coming from a fishing family and with that experience with your mom being able to help you –? How do you think that impacts your work?

A: [18:12] Yeah. I think given what my dad's done and stuff, he's a very well-known fisherman. He's done really well for himself, but he's done it respectfully. He's always had respect for his elders and stuff, so that's definitely helped. But in the same sense of things, fishermen don't really trust anything. You have to gain your own trust and make your own way that way, which has been nice.

Q: [18:35] Yeah. What has that experience been like for you?

A: [18:38] In the beginning, it was difficult. I had a few comments of – “If I sell you my crabs, is your check going to cash?” A few different things. I think that was a little bit to do with age and stuff, being so young. But it's worked out. I hate to say it, but I have to turn away business every day because we're just so busy now.

Q: [19:02] Yeah, that's awesome.

A: [19:03] Yeah.

Q: [19:04] I'm curious, do you think your identity as a woman has had – can you talk about the impact that might have had with those things?

A: [19:10] Yeah, there's definitely been some negative comments over the years. But for the most part, anyone that's seen me work and stuff like that, it's gained a little bit more respect from them, picking up crates just like the guys do and throwing them around and whatnot.

F: [19:25] Can I ask, too – you're young, especially if you started this business six years ago – you alluded to it a little bit in answering a little bit earlier, but I just wonder about that intersection of being also a younger woman in the industry that probably trends male and older, if you feel like that has had an impact at all?

A: [19:43] Yeah, I think in the beginning, a lot of them were skeptical of myself and what I'm doing and stuff, kind of, "Who is this type of person?" type of thing. Then, I think in the end, once I earned that respect, it's gone a long way. They call me and check in with me every day now just to have conversations and stuff, and it's been nice.

Q: [20:03] That's fantastic. I'm curious. Do you think your role with the business, especially with you being so busy – does that impact any family or caregiving responsibilities you might have?

A: [20:14] It makes it hard, I guess, to schedule anything with the family. I've told them I'm on a 10-minute basis, so 10 minutes from now, I have no clue what I'm going to be doing. But they all understand, and they know where to find me at the shop, or just to give me a shout, or something like that. They see that I work hard, that I'm busy, and my life is kind of run by fishermen at this point, so they work with it.

Q: [20:42] And how nice that you have a relationship where they also help you a lot. It seems like you guys really are able to interact in that way.

A: [20:47] Definitely, yeah.

Q: [20:50] So then I want to shift into questions about environment and changes you might be noticing since you interact with so much product. Have you noticed any changes in the marine environment in your time with this business?

A: [21:03] Yeah, definitely. When I was first starting out, we didn't see as many soft-shell lobsters as we do now. There was more of a split season. Once you get into the winter months, you'd see pretty much all hard shells. You just don't see that now. All winter long, you'll get crabs that are shedding, you'll get lobsters that are shedding. And I think we'll just see that more and more. There's been a lot of crabs around the last few years. I'm not sure if that's due to water temperatures or what that is due to. Definitely been a lot more crabs. We've seen quite a few more blue crabs coming up from the south up in the estuaries and the bays and stuff like that.

Q: [21:41] Wow. When did you start seeing the blue crabs?

A: [21:44] I think it's been probably about four or five years now people have been seeing them. Not really in any volume. They'll catch one here or there, but they're definitely starting to come up here.

Q: [21:54] You do feel like the green crabs are increasing as well.

A: [21:57] Definitely.

- Q: [21:59] Definitely. How are those changes impacting your business and the work you do?
- A: [22:04] The demand for them hasn't necessarily grown, but the supply of them has. We're starting to see a little bit lower prices. The competition in the market's increased. More people have gotten into it. So, constantly going back and forth on prices with wholesalers and whatnot.
- Q: [22:24] And is there anything – have you tried anything to account for that or adapt to it?
- A: [22:29] Just rolling with the punches and playing it by ear and seeing what you can do, who you can work with, and stuff.
- Q: [22:37] What does it look like to do that? In your mind, what are all the things you're juggling as you're looking at that?
- A: [22:44] Yeah. I think one of the biggest is logistics, making sure you have enough people, enough trucks on the road and stuff like that, and trying to team up with other businesses. So, if I've got a truck that I have to send down to Boston, call a few friends and say, "Hey, do you have anything that you need to go down to Boston? Throw it on my truck." Kind of all help each other out that way, that way at least some of us are freed up and whatnot.
- Q: [23:06] Do you find that there's a lot of that kind of collaboration?
- A: [23:10] Not typically. No, no. You have to be pretty trusting of someone to be able to work with them like that.
- Q: [23:18] Yeah, absolutely. I'm curious, also with those changes, have you made any changes with where you process, how you process, the way you source – anything like that?
- A: [23:27] I used to go as far north as Cushing, Spruce Head, and stuff like that to get crabs. Now, because the supply has picked up locally, I try to not go that far anymore, as well as the demand for it going down a little bit. I'm trying not to do the huge volume but make more money on the product that we do have. It keeps me off the road a little bit, from three-hour drives there, three hours back, and stuff like that.
- Q: [23:59] Yeah. Have you made any changes here with –
- A: [24:02] As of right now, no. There's really not too, too much more square footage in here to expand, but I'm hoping to in the future.
- Q: [24:09] Yeah, can you talk a little bit more about those plans?

- A: [24:11] Yeah. Eventually, I'd like to buy the building that I'm in and have free range to do whatever I want to do. I haven't really made up my mind of which direction I want to go in yet.
- Q: [24:23] Sure, cool. That's really exciting. Then, with reference to all of these changes you're doing to adapt to the increasing supply, do you think that those have been helpful or useful things for you?
- A: [24:33] Yeah, I think so. It's just managing it every day. Every day, there's something new that you have to adapt to and overcome, and it's just figuring it out. It's a big puzzle and calling the right people and trying to figure stuff out.
- Q: [24:50] Yeah. What's made it possible for you to be able to do that? Do you feel like you're really drawing on relationships you have, trainings you've been to, or what's made it possible for you to do that really fast adaptation?
- A: [25:02] A lot of it is just thinking on your feet, thinking quick of if there's a problem, how to rectify it pretty quick and different things like that. If a truck breaks down, if it's a small fix, instead of waiting two weeks to get into a garage, just fix it yourself and get it back on the road type of deal, and definitely utilizing the people that you know and working with them and picking their brain quite a bit.
- Q: [25:29] Yeah. Do you feel like –? When you're doing that, do you feel like you're drawing on your college experience or your internship in New Hampshire? Are those things also informing the way that you're responding?
- A: [25:40] Definitely, yeah. I think it's just a combination of all the experiences that I've had over the years all compiled together. Working with Gabby at the internship, definitely going to college, working at other seafood places, and working on the boat and stuff.
- Q: [25:55] Yeah. Can you actually take me through a little bit – work you did on the boat with your dad and some of the work with other seafood places?
- A: [26:04] Yeah.
- F: [26:06] (inaudible) you work or the time –? Yeah.
- Q: [26:07] Yeah. The time frame I'm really interested in because, again, you are so young.
- A: [26:11] Yeah. When I went out fishing with my dad, I was pretty young, and that was picking fish out of nets, measuring them on the back of the boat, and then cutting and gutting them, putting them on ice, bring them into port. And then, as far as lobstering goes, it's just baiting traps, running traps, banding lobsters,

different things like that. I worked at a lobster company doing their retail market, just working retail there. Did a little bit of processing, learned how to grade lobsters there. Worked at another lobster company that was a little bit more on the wholesale side of things, as well as processing. So, learning efficient ways to process lobsters a little bit more into the restaurant scene. And then another lobster company that I worked at was more wholesale, so shipping and stuff like that.

Q: [27:03] How old were you when you're doing all these things?

A: [27:05] I mean, working on the boat, I think I've done that since I was probably 13, somewhere around there. The fish market that I worked retail, I believe I was 16, 17. One of the lobster companies, I was 18, 19. And then the wholesale company that I worked at, I was, I'd say, again, 18, 19.

Q: [27:29] Wow. It's really amazing how many of these experiences really feel cumulative to this. Can you talk a little bit about – I don't know – how that informs the work? If you feel like it does, I guess.

A: [27:43] Yeah, definitely. It's, like I said, just picking up knowledge everywhere that I've been and expanding on that and not necessarily trying to do things better, but do things a little bit more efficiently, and doing it that way.

Q: [27:59] Yeah. As you look towards the future, what kind of things do you want to do to adapt, move forward, or grow?

A: [28:08] Yeah. I'd definitely like to expand the retail market. I think it's been really nice to have people that come in and buy your seafood, and you know that it's going to be on their dinner table at night, connect the fishermen directly to the consumers a little bit more, and expand on the processing side of things.

Q: [28:26] Yeah. And what do you think –? I'm curious, with the connecting the fishermen to the consumers – what do you think that looks like?

A: [28:33] Yeah. One thing that we do with the retail market is we tell people where their product came from, which boat it was harvested on, what day it was, what port it was brought in at, just so that way they start to get a little bit more familiar with that.

Q: [28:49] Yeah, great. Is there anything that you really want to do but you feel like you haven't been able to, or you're trying to work through as you look towards the future?

A: [28:58] Yeah, I guess just expanding in all aspects, really.

Q: [29:02] Yeah, because it seems like really you're at the helm of all of it.

A: [29:06] Definitely, yeah.

Q: [29:07] What is that like to be so –? I don't know. What is that like?

A: [29:11] Yeah, it's managing a lot. It's like managing a few different companies in one. The bait is one. Retail is one. Wholesale's, one. Restaurant's one. It's a lot, but we make it work, and I'm thankful. I've got a good crew, and they deal with me being scatterbrained and pivoting last minute all the time. Like I said, we kind of run on a 10-minute basis. We don't really know what we're going to be doing 10 minutes from now, so it's just figuring it all out.

Q: [29:39] Yeah. Did you have a question?

F: [29:41] I have a few. I just wanted to double-check. What year were you born?

A: [29:45] 1998.

F: [29:46] '98. Awesome. I guess I was just thinking of the different species. I see you have Jonas crabs and spider crabs. You also mentioned maybe you also deal with green crabs sometimes. I don't know if that's most of the time. So, just which species? I was curious. You were talking about seeing blue crabs. Do you guys retail in those yet? Or is there not enough? Is that something you're interested in in the future?

A: [30:07] Yeah. The volume locally of blue crabs isn't enough to be able to market here. I've been trying to get in touch with fishermen down south to be able to get them directly off of their boats and have them shipped up here. Shipping is very expensive, so that is something that we're working on.

F: [30:24] And then, you do market green crabs. Is that all the time, or is it sometimes, or you have in the past? I was just curious.

A: [30:31] Yeah. That was something I did in the past. Again, in college, I had a second business. It was Green Bait, and it was using the green crabs as lobster bait. And then I did the internship with Gabby to try and be able to get the crabs molt to restaurants and stuff like that.

F: [30:46] Were you guys able to do that successfully? I know you can talk about the process, but were you able to get the soft-shell crab consistently?

A: [30:52] No.

F: [30:55] One more question, which is, how many employees do you guys have?

A: [31:00] Two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight – eight employees right now.

Q: [31:08] Would you mind actually just running us through all of the species that you do carry?

A: [31:16] Yeah. So, Jonah crabs. We do the jumbo Jonah crabs, which are a pound and a half and up. Inshore Jonah crabs. We do have spider crabs available on occasion. Live local lobsters. We do steamers, mussels, oysters, crab meat, lobster meat. We have a product that's smoked lobster meat. We have some smoked mussels. Sometimes, we'll offer like a bisque or a chowder. As far as fish goes, pretty regularly, we do flounder, cod, haddock. We've got some halibut out there, some swordfish, monktail. And then, every once in a while, we'll throw in something different in there, trying to get more people in the door and introduce people to new species.

Q: [32:01] Cool. When you look towards the future, what do you think your biggest concern is for the marine environment?

A: [32:09] Right now, our biggest concern is what happened to the commercial gillnetting and dragging industry, which is government overreach, cracking down on regulations and stuff without very sound scientific data. Then, on top of that is being able to get the infrastructure to keep up with the amount of product that we have, especially shedding lobsters and crabs and stuff.

Q: [32:37] Yeah. To the point of regulation, if you could talk to like a policymaker and say, "This is what I really think is important looking towards the future," what would you say to that person?

A: [32:48] I'd probably just take them out on the boat for the day and see what they do and see what we see and stuff like that. Because unless you're on the boat doing it every day, you don't really see everything. It's hard to be able to sit in an office or a lab and come up with the decisions that are going to change people's lives.

Q: [33:04] Yeah, absolutely. I'm curious, if you were to take someone out on the boat, what would the thing –? What would you really emphasize to them while you're out there?

A: [33:12] We have a very healthy lobster population. We have tons of juvenile lobsters that are caught every day in the traps that are thrown back. A lot of female lobsters with eggs underneath their tails, a lot of V-notch lobsters, a lot of oversized, a lot of undersized. There's a lot of lobsters that are thrown back. If your trap comes up and there's 10 lobsters in it, sometimes you're throwing all 10 back just because they don't meet the requirements, which is good. It's a healthy stock,

Q: [33:45] Yeah. I'm curious. With lobster and with the future and with regulation, how do you feel about the way that lobster is regulated, especially thinking about

gillnetting and looking towards the future? Sorry, if that's a complicated question. I don't know that my point got across.

- A: [34:06] Yeah. One thing that I've always said is that your fishermen, your lobstermen, they're the biggest environmentalists I know. They don't want to see their livelihood get taken away. They don't want to overfish. I think the biggest thing for every fisherman is to be able to catch something and put it on their plate and have their family enjoy it. Again, it's hard seeing those people getting their livelihood taken away from them over people that have never done it. They don't even know about it. Oftentimes, we'll get boarded by the Coast Guard or Fish and Game or something. There's been so many stories from fishermen that the wardens weren't even using the right size gauges for lobsters, different things like that. There's definitely a lack of communication, a lack of education, and a lack of trust, big time.
- Q: [34:59] What do you think would build that trust?
- A: [35:03] Again, I think putting more people on boats every day so that you can just see what's going on and really appreciate what the fishermen are doing.
- Q: [35:12] Yeah, absolutely. I'm going to transition to some questions about climate and other things. Have you ever participated in any kind of climate resilience or general resilience adaptation training? Anything like that?
- A: [35:27] No.
- Q: [35:28] What do you think might be an effective way to build resilience among fishermen and processors and other people who work with fisheries and aquaculture?
- A: [35:38] Could you explain that a little bit more?
- Q: [35:41] Sure. What do you think –? You described with regulation and with a lot of the changes you're seeing in species, those are all things that people have to adapt to. And I'm curious, what do you think would help people adapt? Does that make sense?
- A: [35:56] Yeah. I think it would be, again, more understanding of what the fishing industry as a whole, whether it's fish or lobster, provides people. What's the benefits of this? It's all local-caught sustainably-harvest food. It's one of the basic necessities of life. It's a protein. Everybody needs it. I think it's having lawmakers understand that and working with the fishermen.

One thing that we're up against right now is the whole windmill ordeal, putting windmills out in the Gulf of Maine. There, I don't feel like, has been enough research on the environmental impacts of that. The fishermen seem to think that



they know what the impacts are going to be. I would lean more towards believing the fishermen because they've been there their whole lives. They know what the ocean in different areas looks like, what the prime breeding grounds are for codfish or for lobster and stuff like that. I think that's a wealth of knowledge that is starting to diminish as more and more people get out of it just because of that overreach.

Q: [37:11] Yeah. To the point of the windmills, are there any other non-environmental challenges that you're seeing that you really want to talk about?

A: [37:18] Yeah. Infrastructure along the coast, all up and down the coast, is huge. New Hampshire, there's really not that much infrastructure that I know about. That's one thing that we're trying to work on. Then, getting more processing facilities on the East Coast to be able to handle the product and stuff and spread it out a bit. That way, it's not just a few big companies, but if you had 100 smaller companies, there's more competition and stuff like that.

Q: [37:51] Yeah. Are you seeing movements to build that infrastructure, or how do you feel like that's going?

A: [37:58] As of right now? No. No, I feel like a lot of it's getting pushed away. In New Hampshire, we did secure about a million dollars to rebuild the building at the Portsmouth pier, but that's not for processing. That's more cold storage for bait and stuff for the fishermen, which helps them in their expenses. They can get cheaper bait and whatnot, but definitely need more help from the government on getting land, property, buildings, and equipment to process.

Q: [38:28] You said rebuild. Was that because of the storms we had earlier in the winter, or just –?

A: [38:33] No, it's a very old building, so it's kind of weathered and hasn't been upkeep, so it's time.

Q: [38:39] I'm curious, have you seen any impact from the storms we had in the winter from your business?

A: [38:48] Me personally, no. But a lot of my boats, they had gear that was just mangled and stuff like that, traps that were pretty much folded in and different things like that.

Q: [39:01] Yeah. Can you tell me about any opportunities or real positive change you've seen in your very long time working on water and doing this kind of stuff?

A: [39:11] Yeah, I think some of the positives have been that there's a little bit more fact-checking, finding out what the truth is and what's not the truth and stuff like that, and sticking together with fishermen and some of the smaller people who try

to do right by the boat to get them a fair price for their catch and whatnot, as well as the general public getting a little bit more knowledge on what's going on.

Q: [39:42] Yeah. As you look towards the future, what is your real hopeful vision for the future of Maine fisheries, aquaculture, marine industry in general?

A: [39:50] I would really like to see more traceable seafood directly to the consumer. I'd like the fishing industry as a whole to export a little bit less fish and stop importing as much fish, and just enjoy what we have locally. Again, that goes into being able to process it. Stop sending it overseas to get processed and then sending it back, as opposed to just process it here and enjoy it here. That way, by the time you eat a piece of fish, it's not two or three weeks old. It's caught a couple days before. That'd be pretty cool.

Q: [40:24] Yeah. Have you noticed any difference in women's presence, status, participation in fisheries in your time?

A: [40:32] Yeah, definitely. I think there's a few women up and down the coast that have their own boat and run their own operations and stuff like that. I think it's gaining traction a little bit, and it's nice to see. I don't know too many females on the buying aspect of things, but there's definitely a few.

Q: [40:51] Do you think you're just –? Do you think that will continue to increase through time?

A: [40:56] I don't know. I think if the market allows for the industry to continue growing and there's viability in the future of the industry, I think we could see that.

Q: [41:06] Great. Is there anything else you wanted to mention before we conclude the interview?

A: [41:14] No, I think that's it.

Q: [41:15] Great. Hillary, do you have any questions?

F: [41:17] I think you kind of alluded to it, but I was just curious. Is there anyone else doing what you're doing on your scale in Maine, New Hampshire, in the region? My sense is no, or at least up where we are, I know there isn't. Is there anyone else filling this niche in the processing? As you mentioned, we know, historically, there was a lot of processing infrastructure. It's mostly been a story of loss, but you came in, and you've established your business. Is there anyone else like you out there?

A: [41:43] Not off the top of my head. Not that I can think of.

F: [41:46] Yeah, wow.

A: [41:47] Yeah.

Q: [41:48] Any other questions?

F: [41:50] That's all. Thank you so much.

Q: [41:51] Great. Well, thank you so much.

A: [41:52] Absolutely.

Q: [41:53] I will turn this off.

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