Q: [00:00:00] You feel good to go? We can start the recording.

A: [00:00:01] Yeah. (laughter)

Q: [00:00:04] So we like to start by asking, how do you like to introduce yourself?

A: [00:00:11] Sorry, I'm overthinking that. How do I like to introduce myself? (laughter)

Q: [00:00:14] Like name, position, job, where we are –?

A: [00:00:19] I'm Sadie Samuels. I'm a commercial lobster fisherman out of Rockport Maine, and I also own a restaurant in Belfast, Maine, and we're currently in Belfast.

Q: [00:00:29] And what's your restaurant?

A: [00:00:30] My restaurant is called Must Be Nice Lobster. And my lobster boat's name is the *Must Be Nice*.

Q: [00:00:36] Nice. Which one came first, the boat or the restaurant?

A: [00:00:38] The boat came first.

Q: [00:00:40] Great. Is there a story behind the choice of the name?

A: [00:00:43] Yes. So, my little sister and I started fishing together when we branched off from fishing with my dad, and we needed to get a new boat that was bigger and we could fish more on. We debated what to name it for a month, and we ended up sitting down one day and just being like, "So, what's everyone going to say when we bring this boat down, a nice, real big fishing boat?" Not huge, but a real boat. We're just sitting there, and we're like, "Everyone's just going to be like, 'Must be nice. Must be nice.'" So, we just put that on.

Q: [00:01:19] It stuck.

A: [00:01:20] Yep, and I've had that – I think I've had that boat for fifteen years now, something like that, maybe more. I don't know. Time flies. (laughter)

Q: [00:01:28] Do you own the boat with your sister?

A: [00:01:31] Nope. I bought her out quite a few years ago. She ended up doing some other stuff, so I'm the one who never left. (laughter)

Q: [00:01:41] Yeah. Getting into a little more of – going way back into your family background, can you tell me when you were born, what year you were born, and a little bit about where you grew up?

A: [00:01:50] I was born in 1991 in Rockport, at the Rockport hospital. I don't know. According to my dad, I went down to the harbor before I ever went home once I left the hospital, and that's where I lobster currently. I now live in Searsmont, but I still fish out of Rockport. I went to high school here in Belfast.

Q: [00:02:18] Where are your parents from? And what did they do?

A: [00:02:21] My dad's from Locust Valley in New York, and he ended up – I think he moved here when he was fourteen or fifteen, and he's been fishing out of Rockport for – I don't know. He'll be upset if I say too many years, but more than fifty, more than fifty years. My mom was from the Waterville area, and her family owned a farm. She ended up going off, becoming a hairdresser, coming back, meeting my dad, and then they ended up on the coast. (laughter)

Q: [00:02:57] Then you mentioned a sister. How many siblings do you have? Age, gender, what do they do?

A: [00:03:02] I've got an eclectic family. (laughter) I have a big sister who's thirteen years older than me, and she lives in the Bahamas and she's a ceramicist. Then I've got two little sisters, Maggie and Molly. My older sister is Renee, but Maggie and Molly are – Maggie's thirteen months younger than me, and then Molly is four years younger than me. Maggie works for the government in some capacity. I'm not quite smart enough or have the clearance to totally understand what she does, but she works for the Foreign Service. She's the smart one in the family, we joke. But Molly's the one who fished with me. We both grew up really liking fishing, and then she kind of went off and did a bunch of aquaculture and stuff like that. She just became a mom. So, now I'm an aunt, and she lives up in Cooper with her family. So, yeah, my family is pretty awesome. (laughter)

Q: [00:04:05] We have a question that's do you have any history of fishing in your family? It sounds like you have a sister who's done aquaculture, a dad who's fished for a long time, but does it go back before that at all?

A: [00:04:16] My family history is foggy. My mom was an only child, and there's not a whole lot of information about her dad's side of the family or anything like that, so I have really no idea over there. On her side, I'm eighth-generation-Mainer, but on my dad's side, I'm first. His family are all a bunch of lawyers and doctors and all that kind of thing. So, they never fished. But back in the history of his family, I know there was a boat captain, but our family doesn't really keep much records. (laughter)

Q: [00:04:56] Do you know what got your dad into it?

A: [00:04:58] Apparently, my dad is kind of like me. Just the second he was born, he's like, “I want to go fishing.” He grew up kind of close to the water. So he was just always hiking down to the beach, spear fishing, fishing, fishing, fishing, anytime he could possibly be fishing. I don't know. Apparently, according to him, that's all he ever wanted to do. That's all he ever thought about. It's pretty consistent. (laughter)

Q: [00:05:24] From what you walked us through, it sounds like, probably not, but just to ask the question, do you have any history of family working in other roles in the fishing industry, but not necessarily fishing, such as fish processing, marketing, bait, gear?

A: [00:05:39] Well, my little sister and I have both done different kinds of fishing. Because I got a commercial license young and have had my own boat for a long time, I haven't been able to jump on other opportunities and try things out, but I did work on a dragger boat when I was younger, and some stuff like that. But my sister Molly has worked on an oyster farm. I'm pretty sure she's worked on a seaweed farm. She's sterned on a bunch of boats in all sorts of different harbors, but that's pretty much it. Yeah.

Q: [00:06:18] Is she out of the industry right now or taking a pause?

A: [00:06:22] Yeah. Right now, she's just full (laughter( mom zone, so she's just taking a break.

Q: [00:06:31] Could you tell me a little bit about your educational background?

A: [00:06:35] Yeah. So, I went to high school here in Belfast, and I graduated in '09, and then I went out to California for college. I went to Humboldt State University in Northern California, and I went there for a studio art degree because, basically, when I graduated, I already had a lobster boat and a commercial license. So, I was like, "Well, I'm done. I'm going to be a commercial lobster fisherman." And my dad's like, "Yeah, no." He's like, "You need a college degree." So he's like, "I don't care what you do. When you're done with that, you can do whatever you want, but you need a backup plan." I was super smart at seventeen and was like, "I'm going to California to get an art degree. See ya." So, I did that, and I think I graduated in 2013, but I didn't end up leaving until 2014. When I was in college, I came home to fish every single summer and paid for school and everything that way. It was the one time I really had – art was my job, which was really cool, but all my art was the coast of Maine, lobster boats, lobsters. I missed it a lot. I wanted to come home. (laughter)

Q: [00:07:51] You stayed until 2014, and then you came back. You've been lobstering out of Rockport since then.

A: [00:07:58] Yep. I've been lobstering out of Rockport. The second I got back from school, I was able to start fishing full-time, and that's been it.

Q: [00:08:08] And then, are you married?

A: [00:08:10] No.

Q: [00:08:11] And do you have any children?

A: [00:08:12] Nope.

Q: [00:08:13] If you had children in the future, would you be interested in them going into fishing or related marine industry?

A: [00:08:20] Yeah. I hope to have kids in the future. That's one thing I struggle with, is like, I really hope that – I hope the industry is still around for me to share it with them. Because for me, growing up with my dad on the boat was the most amazing thing ever. I feel like I had such a good childhood. I don't know. I learned so much, and it just gave me so much joy. I really never played video games. I never did any of that stuff. I was always just like, "I want to be on the boat. I want to go do this, I want to go do that." I just feel like I got so much out of it, and so much self-confidence in a way that helped me through high school, helped me through all the normal baloney. I definitely would want to share that with my kids, like bad. I really hope that they would be into it, but it is a little hard to imagine telling them to do exactly what I'm doing right now. Everything's changing a lot, and it's going to continue changing a lot. So, who knows? By the time they show up, and they're available to perhaps get a boat, do all that stuff, are we going to have an industry? Is there any money in it? Because you can love it as much as you want, but it costs a lot of money to do it, and it's really physically destroying and demanding, so it's kind of hard to weigh that out. At the same time, I'm a sucker for punishment, so I would never tell them not to if they wanted to, but I'd probably do the same thing my dad did. Even though I resented him at the time, I still think I'd be like, "All right, well, you need to have other skills, too."

Q: [00:10:03] And then diving a little more kind of into your current businesses and your role, so you're lobstering, and you have your restaurant. Could you say a little more? Expand on that, describing your current role and work in the fishing sector in Maine.

A: [00:10:17] Yeah. So, I just decided to go big (laughter), which is awesome, and I'm really proud of it, but at the same time, it comes with 800,000 difficult things. I got into lobstering when I was young, and when lobstering was awesome. And basically, whatever you put into it, you'd get out of it. I grew up watching all these guys come in with thousands of pounds of lobster and be able to take care of their families and be huge parts of the community and have these beautiful boats and traps and trucks and the whole thing. I just always was like, "I really want that." But, as I got into it more, and being a young person, making a check, understanding that things cost money, all of that, I was able to kind of see how the industry is very complicated, and we don't have control over – we can only control going out, our equipment, and that kind of stuff. We cannot control the market. We cannot control what bait and fuel costs. All that stuff is really important.

So, I started going to the farmers market and selling lobsters when I couldn't fish full-time because I started with a student license. So, you basically gain your trap limit every season. I started going to the farmers market because I just love lobsters, and I was like, "I'll just talk about lobsters all day, and this is another way I can do that." People really enjoyed my product and encouraged me into lobster rolls. I then went into an indoor farmers market. People loved it. Then I went to a food truck. People really liked it, but the food truck was complicated because we did it through the pandemic. Anyway, that

was just insanely complicated, but we survived, and then pretty much right after, I had the opportunity to go into a brick-and-mortar building. We decided that even with all the risks going on, we would just go for it because it's either going to work or it's not going to work.

Basically, I wake up in the morning during the season, and I go to haul, and then I get off the boat and go straight to the restaurant, and then we do the restaurant and close. Then, I go home, and I pass out, and then I wake up the next day, and I do it again from about May until Thanksgiving. It's amazing. It's really rewarding in a lot of ways. I love lobstering, and it makes me so happy. I love having the restaurant and feeding people what I catch. I'm super passionate about it, but it is just so complicated to make any of the numbers work. People love what we're doing, and I love fishing and all of it, but the whole world has changed. I'm thirty-two. I feel like I'm constantly having the rule book changed. (laughter) I'm like, "OK, we figured it out." And then it's just like, *whoosh*, something totally different. So, it feels like Sisyphus rolling a rock uphill, but at the same time, I so believe in what we're doing. The community loves what we're doing. It's just confusing to know how to change things to make it work. Also, anywhere you live in Maine is basically rural, even if you're in a city. Belfast is growing, but still, the wintertime, things shut down. Lobstering for us – my harbor freezes over, so we stop fishing. I don't know. But it's also really fun to be able to be in control of your own stuff and be able to shift gears and try and evolve and adapt to everything. It's just endlessly entertaining but also endlessly confusing. (laughter)

Q: [00:14:14] It's a lot. Can you take me through the different commercial fishing licenses you have, and then also maybe – it sounds like you started with a student license – where you started from and what you have now?

A: [00:14:26] So, in the state of Maine, when you're in school, you can get a student license, and that's the easiest way to get a lobster license. I got mine when I was seven or eight, and then I had three or four traps. Basically, you start with a couple traps, but it's changed a little bit because – I mean, when I was seven was a quite a long time ago now. Then, you could go all the way up to, I think, 150 traps with your student license, and you had to log two hundred hours on a boat. You had to have that signed off by the wardens and by the captain and all that stuff. But once you got to two hundred hours, it automatically turned into a commercial license. So, when I was fourteen, I got my commercial license. But when you get your commercial license, you can only have the 150 traps, and then each year, you can get another hundred tags. But if you don't buy the tags, then you're set back another year, if that makes sense.

So, it took me quite a while, especially when I went to college and stuff, to get myself up to the eight hundred limit. But I got to that when I was twenty-eight, twenty-nine – something like that. That's pretty much it – student license and then commercial license, and a commercial license covers eight hundred traps, and that's the maximum that you can have. Basically, I ended up with my own boat because I was fishing off my dad's boat, so he had to give up – shave off some of the traps that he was fishing in order for me to pull traps. Then, the fact that I just kind of kept showing up and wanting more,

he's like, “Oh my God, you need to get off my boat.” (laughter) That’s how that happened. Any vessel can do eight hundred traps, but that's it, even if it has two licensed captains on it.

Q: [00:16:30] So, when did you get your own boat?

A: [00:16:32] So, I got my first boat when I was fourteen. It was a nineteen-foot seaway with a little 88 Evinrude outboard on it. That thing was dangerous, but I fished that for a couple years. I named it the *Miss Understood*.

Q: [00:16:50] That’s good.

A: [00:16:51] I felt so good about that. I felt very clever. I fished that for a little while, but then it became clear that – I don't know. It was dangerous trying to fish because I wanted to fish more gear, and that boat – you could maybe fit five traps. If you had two people on it and five traps, the whole thing was basically sinking. Also, fishing with an outboard is difficult because there's rope everywhere. I was only fishing the shoreline in the harbor. Then, I think was seventeen, or maybe I just turned eighteen when my sister and I bought the boat I have now, which is a twenty-eight-foot Novi Ross Bros, and then I've got a three-foot trap rack on it. I love that boat so much. I'm definitely ready to move up, but the industry has been insane, so I invested in the restaurant instead. This boat is like a battle-ax. I've had it for more than fifteen years. I fish eight hundred traps off of it, which is insane. The only hard part is putting them in in the beginning of the season, taking them out at the end and shifting gear. But other than that, it's no problem. (laughter)

Q: [00:18:03] And then do you have –? You have a state license. Do you fish only inshore?

A: [00:18:07] Yes.

Q: [00:18:08] You don't have federal, offshore –?

A: [00:18:08] So, I'm so far inshore that my territory basically stops right around – I overlap with Rockland, overlap with North Haven, overlap with Camden, but I can't go beyond that. I don't go offshore. My boat's not even remotely close to good enough for that. (laughter)

Q: [00:18:33] Are there any other species that you also target or take advantage of if they’re in your traps?

A: [00:18:42] Yeah. Well, I've spent most of my life halibut fishing in the spring, which I really, really enjoy, but that's just changed in a lot of ways, and it costs quite a bit of money to go do it, so I haven't gone the last few years because the market's been weird, and they keep cutting down the times – they keep making the season shorter. Where I like to go, it’s when I know there's no fish there, so it just sucks. (laughter)

Q: [00:19:13] So, you had a halibut license in the past, but you're not –?

A: [00:19:16] Yeah, I haven't. That's one thing I actually take advantage of. I really like to go with my dad because it's one thing where we can still fish together and do that, and it's just really fun. Yeah. It's just changed a little bit. I don't know.

Q: [00:19:33] Any other species you've targeted in the past, or still do?

A: [00:19:36] Green crab. I go after green crabs right now. But they're just an invasive species, so you don't – I think, basically if anyone sees them, kill them. The state is just like, "Kill all green crabs. We do not want them here." So I catch those. I have a green crab trap. There's so many of them. It's insane. I use them at the restaurant in our seafood stock, and it's delicious. It's really, really delicious. But I only use three pounds in a stock, which makes a ton of chowders. I can catch three pounds of green crabs in one minute. Seriously. I can throw the green crab trap off the dock and pull it back up, and it's full of green crabs. It's insane. So, I've been trying to come up with different ways to use them. I've got some acreage in Searsmont, and I'm trying to make compost out of them. I'm trying to figure out how to make a market. I'm trying to give them away to people to see if they'll get a taste for it that I can then sell them because we still need to use bait to get them. But that's something that's been frustrating but also exciting to be part of because they're getting thicker and thicker and thicker up here, which is also affecting the lobster population and affecting the whole way the coast looks like, even clamming – everything. They're eating everything, but they also reproduce faster than, I think, anything else in the Gulf of Maine, something like that. It's kind of scary. So, I don't know. It's one of those things that's new and exciting to experiment with, but also, it's like, "I don't even understand how we're ever going to combat this."

Q: [00:21:27] Have you seen their populations change over your lifetime growing up here?

A: [00:21:31] Oh, yeah, I feel like in the last ten years, I went from having seen them when I'm on the beach as a kid, playing in the seaweed, to catching them in every trap I have in a cove. They would start out being the size of a half dollar. Now, they're the size of a small – I don't even know – Jonah crab. They're huge. I'm catching them huge. Yeah. They're nuts. I've been working with this group called Greencrab.org. It's just so fascinating because they're really trying to get all these different restaurants to use them in all these different ways. I'm constantly looking, like, what are real chefs doing? I like fishing, and I like food, so that's how I got into it. I'm not a chef. I've never been trained for anything. I just know what tastes good. So, I read everything they're doing. I'm like, "OK, I want to try that."

Q: [00:22:30] Yeah, I was just going to ask what got you into – I mean, obviously, you're seeing them, you're hauling them, but what got you interested in experimenting with them? Was that just something you did on your own? Or had you heard about Greencrab.org? How did it start for you?

A: [00:22:43] Honestly, I'm pretty sure I saw – I think the first time that it dawned on me that they were delicious – well, I started catching them, and I was like, "Where did these come from? What are they?" And most stuff in the ocean you can eat. So, I started thinking about it and Googling them. But then I went to the Maine Fishermen's Forum, and they had a table there, and Greencrab.org was there, and I bought a cookbook of theirs. I was speaking to them, and that's when I really was like, "OK, there's something here." They explained to me that it's a delicacy in Spain and stuff like that. In my mind, I'm like, "I'd love to try mochi," which is basically them soft, deep fried. Anyway, it gets your brain going into like, "Oh, what kind of traps do I need? Oh, what kind of thing?" What I'm trying to work on right now is making a – I don't even know – what do you call it? A cage but with all the little cubes in it.

Q: [00:23:49] Little hotel (inaudible).

A: [00:23:50] Yeah, exactly. So, I took a trap apart, and I've been trying to build one at my house. I don't know. It's just interesting, and I love all that stuff.

Q: [00:24:01] Yeah. Right now, you're using them like hard shell for stock in your restaurant, and that's the main preparation.

A: [00:24:07] Yeah. Because I can just get rid of a ton of them at once. I've sat down and picked a few of the big ones. But that is not – I cannot do that fast enough to make it make sense to sell anything at the restaurant. I made crab cakes out of it at home. They were teeny, tiny, little like crab cakes, but they were delicious. I feel like there's a start of something, but nobody's totally figured it out yet. (laughter)

Q: [00:24:38] How about the composting? How long have you been experimenting with that?

A: [00:24:44] I started experimenting with that by doing the stock because I had all the stuff afterwards. I don't know. I like using everything. I just was like, "Oh, I don't want to throw this in the dumpster. It's going to smell, and my landlord's going to be upset with that. I just started taking it home and putting it in a pile. I have a regular compost, and then I started a whole separate compost in the woods. I just started – I don't know. I think I've had it for a year now, and I just keep adding it and turning it around. The shells are all still whole. I've got lobster shells and stuff in it, too. When you go and buy soil, they've got the stuff that's like lobster soil. I put some seaweed in there. We'll see.

Q: [00:25:28] Have you used it yourself in any home gardening?

A: [00:25:31] Not yet, because it's still not broken down enough. I need a tractor. (laughter) That would help a lot. It's just another experiment. I know some people have been doing it more because they've been more prolific in Rhode Island and up the coast, New Hampshire and all that. I've been trying to just look up people who already had been experimenting with those things and just seeing what they are doing.

Q: [00:26:01] You said you got the idea from being at the Fisherman's Forum. What year do you think that was? During the pandemic?

A: [00:26:13] Man, the pandemic made all time not seem real to me. It has to have been three or four years ago. Yeah, I'll say that. (laughter)

Q: [00:26:25] Are you part of Greencrab.org's harvester network?

A: [00:26:29] I don't know. I've talked with them. They've interviewed me. Honestly, I work way too much to be really good at any of that stuff. Everyone's like, "Do you want to be part of this?" I'm like, "Great, as long as I don't have to do anything." (laughter) Call me if you need something, and I will try to get back to you.

Q: [00:26:53] Yeah, that makes sense.

A: [00:26:55] I can be the worst.

Q: [00:26:57] (laughter) Then in terms of any and all species and fishing activity you have, we have some questions just to prompt – getting you to talk about your experience that might be other than the fishing or harvesting itself. Do you have experience in the pre-harvest activities, like bookkeeping, bait, gear preparation?

A: [00:27:15] I do all that for myself. So, yeah, it's a lot. (laughter)

Q: [00:27:27] Can you tell us –? Are you doing traps in the winter? Bait, I know, is a big topic.

A: [00:27:32] So, I bought property in 2019, and I've been working towards building my own infrastructure, but I haven't had that yet. I don't have a shop. I have to wait until the spring. I have a trap yard now, but I don't have a shop, so I have to wait until everything melts in the spring to start doing any gear work, which is a pain in the butt because you have all the downtime in the winter, and then, all of a sudden, things start to change, and it's just full-on go time. So, gear work just starts – literally, you wake up, and you're just like, "Can I pull those ropes out of this ice pile? I think I can. All right. I'm going to get those done today." And then you go from there. The second it's forty-five degrees up to fifty-something degrees, it's like, "OK, I could paint something." But yeah, I mean eight hundred traps. You have to touch every rope, every buoy, every trap. It's a lot of work. It is a lot of work. With the bookkeeping and stuff, honestly, it's way easier than restaurant. I feel lucky that I've had my – I started when I was really young, and so my dad helped guide me through a lot of it. I think the hardest part is the way that I fish; it's seasonal, and that's how most people fish around here. So, you really have to be good at managing your money in a way to get you through the winter, which is really difficult because also, as a fisherman, you're a gambler, so you're like, "Oh my God, I need a new engine. I'm just going to go for it and assume that the lobster season is going to be awesome because why wouldn't I?" But then, that's why the last few years have been so crazy because you

just have to keep investing in yourself. When things are showing – "OK, I've been tracking like this for the last few years. I know I can do this. I know I can do that." But there's no safety net when it all goes the opposite direction. That's what's been happening in the last few years, is people really invested in themselves. They got the boat that made it less wear and tear on your body. They invested in the traps that fish better. They did this and that, and then it just – I don't know. Then people aren't being able to make payments. People aren't being able to do this and that. That's also why I stuck with my boat, which bothers me sometimes because I've way outgrown this thing, but at the same time, I own it. The bank doesn't own it. You have to really think about all that stuff way more than other people do. (laughter)

Q: [00:30:19] That's a lot. Yeah. Can you tell me about any experience you have –? I think you already have mentioned some earlier, but if you want to say more about it in terms of post-harvest, processing, marketing, trade. I'm thinking you talked about even starting really young at farmers markets, doing your own direct marketing.

A: [00:30:34] Yeah. Even before the farmers market, I used to be really – it's funny, I haven't really thought about this, but I used to be really interested in trying to sell my lobsters directly to restaurants. I used to just hike around, being like, "Hi, my name is Sadie. I fish in Rockport. Do you want live lobsters for your restaurant? I can deliver them." That was always cool. It got me into these restaurants that I just thought were really cool, but I always fished, so I never worked in a restaurant or anything. I always loved food. I'm like, "Well, my product's high quality. If you're selling Maine lobster, and you're in this area, you should be selling my Maine lobster." So, that was cool. I did it with the halibut, too. That showed me that if I just put in extra effort, I could get paid a little bit more, work with really cool, talented people. Then, that led me to the farmers market, where I'm driving around. Delivering small batches of lobster was a lot of effort for not that much money. So, I'm like, well, what if I go to a farmer's market, and I bring my whole catch there, and then I can sell them to the people coming to the farmers market?

That worked out pretty cool. It's been exciting to be – when you're lobstering, you're just on the boat. You wake up before anyone else wakes up. You go to work, you're done, you're tired, you go home, and you go to sleep, generally, and you're just around your little community. By bringing the lobsters to the people, most of them have never even met a fisherman in their entire life. I realized that it was an opportunity for me to show people a different face of who's actually lobstering. I really, truly believe in eating food that's as close to the source as possible, knowing who harvested it, all that stuff because then you know that it's good practice. You know where your money's going. It stays local, all that stuff. I believe in all of that. It was really cool to get to start meeting people and talk to people who didn't know anything about lobsters; they've just eaten them. They had no idea how much effort it takes to go get one. They have no idea what investments it takes, how much skills you have to build up over time, how much wear and tear on your body it is. They had no clue. That's what snowballed into my Must Be Nice lobster restaurant. Even when I was able to fish full time, I still was like, "Well, I'll still do my Saturdays." It was nice community, social time. Yeah. So, I just really enjoyed that.

Q: [00:33:25] Yeah. You started experimenting with direct marketing as a teenager, right?

A: [00:33:28] Yeah.

Q: [00:33:29] Was your dad, at the time, selling all of his lobster to a dealer? Did you know people direct marketing?

A: [00:33:34] My dad was always basically selling directly to the dealer and me too. We catch so many lobsters that no one, no restaurant, nobody's going to take that many. I'm trying to think. No one's really ever asked me this question. How did I even think about that? I guess just growing up in the industry, you know that there's always – you have to hustle a market sometimes. I've just been involved since I was so young. Honestly, maybe halibut fishing got me into it because halibut fishing, you have to make your own market. So, I'd go fishing on my dad's boat, but I was the one who would call the co-op, call the restaurants, call all the places around, and negotiate a price and all that stuff. I don't know. I was definitely a young teenager when I started just calling places. Also, I didn't really grow up with any friends doing what I was doing. Maybe that also made me feel like, well, I've got the best product, so I should be the one doing this. (laughter)

Q: [00:34:49] Sounds like you're a natural marketer.

A: [00:34:51] I guess so. (laughter)

Q: [00:34:52] Do you have any experience doing advocacy for the industry, or being involved with community-based organizations related to fisheries?

A: [00:35:03] Yeah. I've been part of the MLA [Maine Lobstermen's Association] pretty much my whole life. Growing up, I've always been fairly involved, but the last few years, there's been a lot of stuff against us, and we've been having a lot of issues. That definitely got me to – literally, I've pretty much done any interview anyone's asked me to do, no matter what, even though it's complicated in my time frame and this, that, and the other I've written to NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] probably a hundred times. I've done all the public commenting for everything I could figure out. I do a lot of that. I've gone to anything where the fishermen get together, which really doesn't happen very much. The MLA has had a few different meetings and things like that. I've gone to some stuff with the DMR [Department of Marine Resources], but it's hard. It's really hard to – a lot of times, a lot of the things that happen that you're supposed to comment at happen when they know fishermen can't make it. That's been really difficult, especially because we're the whole coastline, and oftentimes, they'll do it in Portland or something. So, for me, that's two hours. Someone from way up north – they make it hard. (laughter)

Q: [00:36:37] Yeah, definitely. Do you have any experience in fisheries extension?

A: [00:36:43] What's that?

Q: [00:36:44] Sea Grant, for example.

A: [00:36:48] Have I worked with Sea Grant? I don't know. Were they involved in the –? I don't think so. But I can't remember at this point. That's the other thing. I've done so many things, and I'm just like, "Sure, this sounds like a good idea," and then, the next day, I'm like, "All right, I've got eight hundred other things."

Q: [00:37:13] Can't keep it all –

A: [00:37:13] I'm horrible like that. (laughter)

Q: [00:37:14] It's OK. No worries. Not super important. Do you have any experience participating in any research and development related to the industry?

A: [00:37:24] Not particularly. I've talked with the DMR a few times about some of the projects they've been doing, but I wouldn't say I've ever been insanely helpful just because of the scale of what I'm doing. I've tried, and I know a lot of people do. Yeah. (laughter)

Q: [00:37:46] Any background in the hatchery side of (inaudible) –

A: [00:37:50] No, none of that.

Q: [00:37:51] – aquaculture?

A: [00:37:52] None of that.

Q: [00:37:53] And then we have food service, food preparation, customer interface. Yes.

A: [00:37:57] Yes. I excel at that. (laughter)

Q: [00:38:01] Remind me, how long did you say your restaurant's been open?

A: [00:38:05] This is our second full season open in the space that we're in at the restaurant. Now, I get all my lobster processed for me because, oh my god, when I started, we picked all the lobster ourselves. I just had a flashback. It was basically you'd get off the boat with a hundred pounds of lobster and go straight to the commercial kitchen and cook the lobster and then pick it out. I'd get home at eleven o'clock at night and then get up for the farmers market the next morning at six, and that was just insane.

Q: [00:38:43] Too much.

A: [00:38:44] But we did it. We did it. (laughter)

Q: [00:38:47] I'm curious because I know we've lost a lot of our processing infrastructure; where do you get your meat picked?

A: [00:38:53] There's a few different processors still in the state, but I go through Greenhead.

Q: [00:38:58] Cool. And if you can, which you might have to pick a few different times of year, talk – you've been doing it a little bit throughout the interview, but could you tell us what an average day of work looks like for you, and that could be in the on season versus –

A: [00:39:13] Yeah. The one thing about my life is that every month, it totally changes. In general, an average day of work for me is I get up before sunrise, and then I get down to the harbor. I get my boat, and I get my bait, and I get my crew, and then I go out and haul. The thing is, you can start hauling at first light. So, it changes dramatically from when you can start working early in the season to – right now, it's not until six, 6:30 until it starts getting light. But early on, it's like 3:30, four o'clock, which is awesome. I start around then, and then I go and pull traps. It takes about eight hours. I come back in, put the boat on – sell my lobsters. Then I go and get my crew off the boat, wash the boat down, put the boat on the hook, come back in, grab my check and my slip, and then go to the restaurant. That's always a whole bag of monkeys, whether they need me to step in and work front-of-house or hop in the kitchen or get them something that we ran out of, or talk to customers, or something like that. I end up being there until – in the summer, we close at seven. I'll get home at nine or ten, depending on how that went. (laughter) Then, usually, lately, I've been just eating dinner at the restaurant. I get home, and I pass out, and I wake up in the morning. (laughter) Yeah. But it's nice. I don't really feel – in the winter, my whole life just stops. The restaurant – we shut down around Thanksgiving, Lobstering, I now shut down around Thanksgiving. I used to fish into January, but it just hasn't been super worth it for me. Also, I have a lot of physical issues from fishing, so I'm trying to be a little smarter as I get older. (laughter) I just take a break. The last ten years, I've been going to the Bahamas in the winter, so that's been awesome.

Q: [00:41:31] Nice. Because you have a sister down there, right?

A: [00:41:33] Yes. That's where my big sister lives. Actually, it's where my ex-boyfriend's from. So, I know everybody. It's nice. You go down. It's family. It doesn't feel like a real vacation. It feels like, OK, I'm going to my other home. It's also the only way for me to stop working all the time is to be in a different country (laughter) because otherwise, you look out, and you're like, "Oh man, I got to do this. Oh, I got to do that. Oh my gosh. I should just go in and do this one thing that turns into eight hundred things." You can't stop, especially when you're your own boss. It's like, well, if you don't do it, no one's going to do it. And then you just keep going like that. (laughter)

Q: [00:42:18] Yeah. Wow. Could you tell me a little bit about how you feel that your background or identity sort of shapes your work in the fishing industry, including how others perceive or treat you?

A: [00:42:30] I feel like that one kind of tough. I grew up definitely feeling like I could do anything and that me being a girl didn't really matter. But as I've gotten older, I have felt like that's not so much the case. (laughter) But I also think that, in a lot of ways, I've had to work a lot harder than other people to have, like, any respect or anything at all in the industry, which is a pain in a lot of ways, but also a good thing. And that's why I am such a hard worker, and I'm really stubborn, and I don't really know when to back down all that stuff, which is a good thing when you're wanting to run a business. Things are always complicated. Things are always hard. You have to be adaptable, and you have to be able to be tough and not take things that people say personally and all that stuff. But it's also hard. I don't know. When you think that this whole community is like community, and then you realize that you've known them for thirty-plus years, and when it comes down to it, you're still the person that nobody cares about. (laughter) I don't know. It can be really lonely, but at the same time, there's nothing I'd rather be doing. I don't know. There's a weird thing about it, where, really, when it comes down to it, you're the one that everyone's just like, "Whatever."

Q: [00:44:16] Does it make a difference being a woman in the industry, having grown up here on the coast, and being from a fishing family? Do you feel like that shapes experience too?

A: [00:44:29] I think that in Maine, it makes a huge difference if you have the same last name as a million other people because then you have a whole gang of people that are – they're just always together, even if there's big drama. But I don't really know. I've only had my experience. (laughter)

Q: [00:44:59] I don't know if you have any of these, but how does your role in the fishing sector work with any sort of family or caregiving responsibilities that you may have, including future plans for them, if relevant?

A: [00:45:14] I find it very complicated. It's hard for me to imagine how it works, which is partially why I don't have any kids yet because I have struggled wrapping my head around how I make all that work. But I have some really awesome women friends in the industry who basically when I've talked to them about it, specifically this one woman who is just – she's such a badass. I remember talking to her about it, and I'm like, "I want to have a family. I want to do these things. How does this work?" And she's like, "Well, you're the boss. You can do whatever the hell you want." (laughter) She's like, "You can show up to work when you need to. You don't have to show up at four o'clock in the morning." But also part of the industry is proving yourself and being on the same – blah, blah, blah. But as a woman and having more obligations than most of these guys do, it's hard to see the judgments, but it's also like, that's totally right. This is my job. This is my business. This is my boat. If I want to show up at ten because my kid needs to do whatever, but I still want to go haul, I'm going to do it. I don't know. Just being able to talk to some women who've made it happen has made me feel better about it and more confident about it. My mom hasn't been a huge part of my life. So, I don't really have a lot of female influences to help me think about that. I've just more had the male influence

of “Get up and go. You can't take time off. You can't do this. You can't do that.” So, that’s been a little bit conflicting. I don’t know. I think it's exciting. (laughter)

Q: [00:47:09] Thanks. So, shifting gears a little bit to any observations you have about how the marine environment has changed, can you describe any changes in the marine environment that you've noticed in your time on the water?

A: [00:47:21] Well, everything they said that was going to happen when I was in elementary school is happening. Surprise, surprise. The ocean's getting way warmer. Everything's different. Nothing is the same as it was when I was a kid. For one, lobsters are moving north towards Canada because the water is getting warmer, and all the animals are changing. I'm seeing tuna fish in the bay. I never saw that as a kid ever. Also, all the codfish and striper and all these other fish are coming back, which are like eating lobsters, and all of that stuff is causing the lobster population to go down. I find it all confusing because I swear it's exactly what they said was going to happen when I was in third – all my life in school. But now it's a contested thing. “Well, it's overfishing.” No, it's not because we knew this was going to happen. We have all these regulations – we have had the most regulations of anyone catching lobsters. We throw back way more than we keep. You told us they were moving north to Canada. Canada's having the biggest record harvest that they've ever had in all of time. But now you want to tell us that we're overfishing all of a sudden? Give me a break. Everything's changed. We see it every single day. People are catching seahorses once in a while in their traps. Someone caught an ocean tally, which I see in the Bahamas. It’s wild. Things have changed just exponentially. I can't even keep up. (laughter)

Q: [00:49:04] Yeah, wow. So I'm hearing you say obviously warming water, shift in the lobster population latitude, also different species showing up.

A: [00:49:15] Predators. So many more predators. All of a sudden, we have more sharks than we've had in years. That's because we're having more bait than we've had in years, which means we've had more seals than we've had in years, which means sharks have more food than they've had in years. It's all connected, and the warming water is also causing a lot of different weird things that you're seeing more down south. But it’s coming up this way, like algae blooms and things like that that take all the oxygen out of the water and then cause these big mass deaths. I don't know. It just seems like all these things are happening faster and faster than they ever did. I mean, all the old timers are everything happens in the seven-year cycle, which, on one hand, seems totally true. You look back, and that makes a lot of sense, but now everything's happening. There's the natural seven-year cycle, but then like this whole other tornado going on at the same time. I don't know. The best thing my dad ever said was, “The more he fishes, the less he knows.” I swear to you, that's it. You can go lobstering and take all the traditional things – “Oh, when the lilac blooms, there'll be shedders” – blah, blah. None of it's true anymore at all.

Q: [00:50:34] The shedding, the time of year of that is different now, too?

A: [00:50:36] Oh, yeah. It's all water temperature dependent. Fall used to be the time when we would be just rolling in lobsters. That hasn't happened in a while. I know it's different because our territory is super strict, so offshore has been doing better than inshore. But a lot of that is because the deeper water keeps temperature more consistent. Lobsters just are really sensitive to that. It's also changing their molting pattern and their dropping their eggs pattern. But we just keep going and try and like – it's like, "Well, last year, this kind of seemed to work, so we'll try that. Oh, no. OK." But other things – last year, we had a ton of rain. It rained and rained and rained and rained and rained. The freshwater had a huge impact on everything going on in the ocean, too. But also, we have crabs like we've never had. I'm catching more crabs in my traps than anything sometimes it seems like, and they're getting huge. That all competes with lobsters for territory. That all competes with – they're all fighting each other for food. It's insane. (laughter)

Q: [00:51:53] There are many different changes, so this a big question, which is how do those changes you just described impact your work with your lobster business and the restaurant?

A: [00:52:01] Well, us catching a lot less lobsters is not good because it still costs us. It costs us more now to go out and catch them just because of the way everything has gone, and we're getting paid less to do it. I don't know. We have so much up against us. We keep being expected to reinvest in all of our gear over and over and over again. No one's paying for that except us. We're not making any money. That all just trickles out to the entire communities. Lobstering has been a huge part of the economy. That has really kind of turned off. Lobster fishermen are not spending money like they used to. We all used to have a great shedder season, go out and buy a new truck at the local place. We used to go take our family out to dinner, donate to the school hockey fund, and this, that, and the other. Now, a lot of fishermen – there's still some doing really well, but it's not the norm. People are just kind of like, "Ugh, I want to, but I can't." People are losing their boats and losing their houses and losing – it's part of it, but I don't know. It's just terrifying. (laughter)

Q: [00:53:26] Is there anything you've tried as a business owner, both on your boat or in your restaurant, to cope with or adapt to some of those changes you described?

A: [00:53:35] My whole restaurant has been pretty much for me to attempt to adapt to all the changes because, for me, to sell the lobster to myself cuts out the middleman, which means I'm able to sell it for a higher profit. But that being said, it hasn't really worked out yet because I also had to invest in the restaurant, the infrastructure, and the whole thing. The long-term goal is that eventually, I'll have all that going, and I'll be able to basically benefit off of my fishing reputation regardless of what happens in that industry and still be able to use the restaurant to, perhaps, keep my boat and make something off of lobsters. I don't know, but it's confusing. I really hope things turn around in the industry, and this is just – we're just going through a hard time, and it all bounces back, but it's kind of hard to see that happening, especially with the way that everyone – the people who are in charge – are thinking about solutions because the solutions really seem to be against us for the most part. But with the restaurant, I'm really hoping I can at least

– even if the catch goes down so far, people are still going to be eating lobsters. They're still coming to Maine for that. They still want that. But I have been considering – I don't know – doing all the things, like boat tours and more catering. I'm constantly trying to come up with something else.

Q: [00:55:15] Other sort of options to diversify income.

A: [00:55:18] Absolutely, and just use whatever I can that we are catching because the thing is, the tourist side of it, even though, growing up as a purist fisherman, it's hard for me to accept that at this point, but the tourists still all want it, and that's where the money's at. My boat's my sanctuary. I don't want other – I don't want people out there. I don't want to explain everything I'm doing. I just want to do it. I'm just enjoying it. I'm out here to make money. You have to have a certain pace. It's awesome. But then you take other people out, and it's cool. It's nice to share it, but it really gets – it's just kind of like, "Yep, this is a lobster, and this is how you band a lobster. All right. Now, here's a lighthouse, and there's a seal." It's cool, and people really enjoy it. I feel like being at the restaurant and dealing with people all the time, which I am passionate about, but the only way I feel like I have the battery power to do that is if I get to be actually lobstering on the boat. (laughter)

Q: [00:56:25] Yeah. So, if you had to change that, where your boat was now a tourist experience, it would be hard for you, or it'd be (inaudible) change?

A: [00:56:30] It's hard for me to wrap my head around. But I think also just having as many backup plans as possible is the only thing you can really do at this point.

Q: [00:56:41] In terms of, kind of getting the whole restaurant off the ground as part of – you described as a response to all these uncertainties, what made that possible for you? It's a big deal to open a brick-and-mortar restaurant. Did you have any kind of resources, relationships, knowledge, training, organizations that you drew on to make that happen? How would you describe what made that possible?

A: [00:57:06] I did all of that in probably not the smartest way. I just did it all myself. Lobstering was pretty good. I basically took all my profit from lobstering and invested in all of this. That gave me a cushion for quite a few years of being like, "OK, I can gamble with this." I know I'll still make just enough money to survive with lobstering. I made more than that, so I was able to know that I'd have enough money to survive while also being able to gamble. Now that I'm a little older and I know people who are in the industry, most people don't do that. They get grants and funding and all this stuff. I also didn't really ever know anyone doing anything that I was doing, so I never really had any guidance on that. It's also nice. I'm full owner of all my own stuff. Whatever decisions I make are the decisions, whether they be right or wrong. I just started trying to get more connected into some of those things. What was it? I took the Top Gun course last winter, I think it was, or the winter before last, through the Maine Center for Entrepreneurs. That was really awesome. That linked me up with a ton of really smart, talented people. I think the other thing is being in a small town in a rural space and working all the time, your

network is kind of what is around you. Sometimes, you need more than that. You need someone from Portland who's doing it in the city and can give you advice because a lot of the businesses around here are just generationally owned, whereas I started from scratch. But as I get older, and as I keep doing it, I keep meeting more people and getting good mentors and stuff like that. But it's just been a – I was just like, "Yeah, sure, if anyone else can do it, why can't I do it?" (laughter)

Q: [00:59:21] And then have you been able to try everything you would want to, to be able to adapt to all the changes you described? Or, on the flip side, are there experiments or adaptations you'd like to try but haven't been able to?

A: [00:59:34] Yeah. No, there's definitely quite a few things I would like to try, one of them being – I started attempting to get a mini cart so that I could do catering and fairs and stuff like that. But that was a whole mess. I basically have to tear – I tore the whole thing down, and we're rebuilding it from scratch. That's a future plan. But I think something like that is a really good idea. There's events everywhere all around all summer, and rather than sitting and waiting for people to come find you, you go find them. Then that's more advertisement for the restaurant. It's something I could do basically on my own or with one other person. The other thing is maybe doing one or two boat tours a week or month or something like that. Just having that option, I think, makes a lot of sense because also, on top of everything, that is another way to take people out to do something they wanted to do on their vacation, promote my restaurant – it all kind of goes together. So, I'm trying to think of more multi-level marketing schemes, I guess.

Q: [01:00:50] Yeah, or they reinforce each other.

A: [01:00:52] Yeah, things that can make stuff I've already really worked hard and invested in function. But the other thing around here that's really difficult is finding employees. I went big with the restaurant, and now I'm attempting to figure out a way to keep everything that we have going going, but at the same time, not need more people to do more. It's confusing. But every restaurant around here right now, the second kids go back to school, nobody has employees. (laughter) I don't see that changing anytime soon. So, that's also an interesting part of it. It's also odd because things – I have gotten some mentors who are way older than me, and I've had really successful businesses in the past, but things have changed so much, so a lot of the things that worked for them just don't work in this day and age. It's, on one hand, terrifying, but on the other hand, it's exciting. It's like, "OK, well, nobody really knows the answer. Let's try this. Let's try that. This could work."

Q: [01:02:07] Yeah, wow. Could you describe – what do you feel like is your biggest concern about the marine environment for the future of Maine's fisheries?

A: [01:02:19] My main concern, I guess, is that – I don't know. I've got a few concerns, and they're not super popular opinions. I'm severely anti-industrializing the ocean in any way. It makes no sense to me as to how that makes anything better at all in the world, period. I have heard nothing, read nothing that makes that make sense to me, especially in

the sense of caring about the stuff in the ocean. The more we drill the ocean, the more we do sonar blasting, the more we bomb the ocean, all this stuff, it all affects the animals. They know that when it comes to fishermen, but then it's totally fine for them to want to put these like huge wind farms in, all the fish farms, all these things. And then the argument is green energy or needing to feed people. People who are starving are not eating salmon. Green energy? There's a million things we can be doing on land with land that's already developed and already whatever. It makes no sense to me. That terrifies me. You can see the impacts of a lot of those things while you're out there. I have a friend over in Rhode Island, and you talk to them, and the wind farms have absolutely affected that whole part of the ocean. Part of what we like is going out there and then leaving. It's like, yeah, I've got a trap in the water, but I don't anchor my boat and live there for all of time. All the animals and everything still get to use it. It's all happening. It's natural and normal. Nature will figure itself out if we just leave it alone, in my opinion. I don't know. That just terrifies me because the more we think that we have the answers, the more we've destroyed the environment everywhere on this whole entire planet.

So, no one can ever convince me that that's the answer to anything. I also believe that – why don't we talk about using less ever? It makes no sense. I think the only way to have an ocean or to have any environment left, which is the thing that's the most valuable thing to me in the entire world and that future generations deserve to have is to just leave it alone a little bit more. Let it be nature. Let the animals do what they're doing. They don't see lines and borders the way that we do. They move when the water gets too hot. Different things start growing here, different things start growing there. Mother Nature has a plan, and I just feel like we keep messing with it, and it's terrifying. You just keep seeing all the consequences on the news all the time. Florida constantly having big death scenarios in the water. It's terrifying. If we have no environment left, then what's the point? I don't know. (laughter)

Q: [01:05:30] And then, the flip side of that, if you could tell policymakers in Maine what the biggest priorities should be to help people adapt to or maybe prevent some of what you're describing, like stop it rather than adapt to it, what would you tell them what they should be prioritizing?

A: [01:05:46] I think prioritizing the people who live in Maine and the voices of the people who live in Maine would be awesome, and not prioritizing the big companies coming in and trying to profit off of us. I think one of the things about being a Mainer that's pretty through and through most of us is we like the way things are. We're simple people. I don't need a Tesla car. I don't need 5,000% more electricity. Let me live on the coast. I'll walk to my boat, but we can't do that. It's confusing. I think I'm just way more of a minimalist in the sense of those things. It feels like the state doesn't really listen to us anymore, and that's frustrating. I know my whole community feels that way because we went from being like the star child of us coming up with solutions and us doing this and us doing that to being told that we don't know what we're talking about, we're wrong, this, that, and the other. We need to be open to innovation. We need to be open to this, but it all comes with a price tag that no one else is paying for. Also, how is it better –? I don't know. I think my brain just does not function like other people's because it's like,

OK, we all have these things that we already have. How is it better for the world and the environment to force us to buy more stuff? What are we doing with all this stuff that already exists? Just putting it in a landfill? It's all being used. It's all functioning. It's all fine. That stuff makes no sense to me. Also, they know we're not making money. So, it's like, if you don't want us here, just be honest about it. It just is confusing. I don't know. All of us want things to function. We all are invested here. Most people have lived here for a hundred generations or something. I don't know. (laughter)

Q: [01:07:53] Have you participated or had the chance to participate in any climate resilience or adaptation training programs for the fishing industry?

A: [01:08:00] No, I haven't even heard of those.

Q: [01:08:03] Neither has anyone else we've interviewed.

A: [01:08:06] It's interesting. (laughter)

Q: [01:08:07] But we like to ask, and then if anything comes to mind, what strategies do you think would be effective in helping people in the fishing industry build resilience to the climate-related changes that people are experiencing? If training were to exist, what kinds of things would people benefit from?

A: [01:08:27] Honestly, I don't really know. The thing is, for us, I think quite a few years ago, everyone would have been very open to yeah, things are changing. How can we adapt? What are we going to do with more hurricanes coming up through here? And how do we make the working waterfront more, I don't know, resilient to all of that stuff and the storms and blah, blah, blah? Keep our infrastructure functioning, things like that. At this point, I think it's a lot more of – are we going to exist in two years? So it's hard to be like, yeah, as the climate's changing, how do we adapt to that? It's one thing when you know that you're going to be around, and it feels a lot different when it's like, well, I'm just trying to get to next season. I'm just trying to make sure my kid can go to school. I'm just trying to pay off my college debt. I think that that's one thing. I think maybe the state just really needs to come up with a way to let us know that they want us around still, then people would feel like, OK, well, let's move forward with solutions and try to figure this stuff out or let us know that those things exist, programs to – whatever. I don't know. It's incredibly confusing because I don't think anyone would deny all these – we're watching it happen right in front of our eyes, but no one's changing what's causing any of it. So, why should we change? Why do we have to change everything we're doing and adapt to something that is clearly being caused by other things? But nothing has to change on that end. It's confusing, and it feels like we have the least resources to do anything about it. (laughter)

Q: [01:10:44] We've been asking about a lot of different kinds of changes, but are there any other types of changes which might not be environmental, that you haven't told us about, that you feel like are impacting your work that you want to share? You talked a little bit about being hard to hire people. That's a kind of change that –

A: [01:11:01] Yeah. Crew is insanely difficult, but it's hard. Lobstering is so much work, and unless you know you're going to get paid really well, a normal person would never do it, ever. You have to be nuts to love it, even when you're not making any money. Because the wear and tear is insane. I'm thirty-two, and I have multiple exploded discs in my back. I have severe arthritis in my sacrum. I have shoulder issues, wrist issues, all of the things (laughter), which is just normal, natural for long-term physical labor. Younger people are looking at us and being like, "Why would I do that? Why would I work that hard? Why would I do that for nothing?" There was something else that I was thinking. Can you say the question one more time?

Q: [01:12:03] Sure. Are there other types of changes that don't have to be environmental necessarily that are impacting your work you want to tell us about?

A: [01:12:11] So, the other one that I thought of is there's definitely some weird stuff going on with the price of lobster, and one thing that's happening – we don't have very many processing plants or anything in the state anymore, so we don't really have control over our industry like we used to have. So we're controlled by big seafood buyers. A lot of stuff that's been happening the last few years is out-of-state buyers have been coming in and inflating the price artificially to the point where – because they are the heavy hitters, they can do that, but the local, small-time buyers, who have been holding on, can't compete with them. So, fishermen are in a pickle; we need to make more money. If this buyer over here is paying us X, and this buyer over here is paying fifty cents more, a lot of times, boats will just go over to the other buyer, and that ends up putting the local buyers out of business and then they actually have stake in our communities and actually have a reason to want to see us succeed and be here, whereas, somebody in Chicago sitting behind a desk who's just like, "OK, well, we can afford to do this, and let's see how many boats we can attract and get rid of this buyer." It's happened multiple times where they inflate the price, and then they bottom it out. So, that is really concerning to me, and that's also a huge reason I did the restaurant, because there's nothing we can do about any of that. All we can do is just have solidarity with our local buyers and hope that that's enough. That part's really confusing, and that's definitely something that I'm like, Huh? If it gets to the point where we have no local buyers, then I have no idea what that means for the future of the industry because, unfortunately, we have to make money. (laughter)

Q: [01:14:13] That's really interesting. Nobody's told us. We haven't heard that exact story yet.

A: [01:14:17] It's been weird the last few years.

Q: [01:14:20] You said one response to that was you opening your own restaurant to not have to be reliant on the buyer. Yeah. Is there anything else that comes to mind in terms of responding to that?

A: [01:14:32] That's my only – I don't know. It's confusing. It's just confusing because the thing is, we really rely on our buyers and generally have close relationships with them because we buy our bait and fuel and everything through them, and then they are committed to buying all of our lobsters. I don't know. There's not a whole lot we can do. Lobster fishermen aren't really allowed to all get together and come up with a plan unless you have a co-op or something like that, and not everywhere has a co-op. A lot of places don't have enough fishermen to really have a co-op, things like that. It's hard for me to see what other solutions there are out there if that stuff happens because also, we're each our own small business. So, there's only so much – and, what, there's 5,000 of us now? That's not very many. We don't have all that much fighting power. I mean, if they'd come fight us to our faces, maybe. But that's never going to happen. (laughter)

Q: [01:15:53] Yeah. Then, maybe gears a little bit. Can you tell us about any opportunities or positive changes that you've noticed in the industry in your time?

A: [01:16:03] Yeah. So one thing that I've noticed in my time lobstering that's made me really, really happy is when I was a little kid, the only time anyone wanted to talk to me about fishing, all they wanted to talk to me was about the fact that I was a girl, and that used to bother me a lot because I've always just been like, "I'm a fisherman," and I've wanted people to want to talk to me because I'm good at fishing, because I'm good at my business, and I'm good at what I do and used to really drive me nuts. It's like every person was like, "You're a girl. What's it like being a girl? What's it like being a girl?" Granted, that gave me a lot of publicity and has really helped me build my reputation for my restaurant. But deep down, as a fisherman, it's always been like, *ugh*. But there's multiple young girls right now that are lobstering, and there's a lot more women in the industry than I grew up knowing about and seeing and actually seeing in things and having any representation of. I was recently reading an article about one of the young girls in my harbor, and the whole article talked about her getting her grandfather's boat. Didn't once talk about how she's a girl fisherman and what's it like being a girl fisherman? It was just that she's a fisherman. She loves it. She worked hard enough to buy her grandpa's boat. I just literally was like, "This is amazing." That made me so happy.

So, there's definitely a lot more representation, and I think, a lot more opportunity for diversity in the industry. Oftentimes, people don't try things that they don't see someone like them doing. I think just the fact that that's way more prominent means that people – there are a lot of hardships about the industry, but it's so rewarding, and it's the best office you could ever have. I don't know. I never feel better than coming in from a long day hauling and feeling accomplished and getting a check for the work you just did – there's something so satisfying about it. The fact that other people, if you want to do it, know that they can do it is awesome. I think that that might be the best thing for the future of the industry, is just getting more diversity of thought and opinions and ideas on how we can move forward in a way because it's always been the same people making all the decisions. So, I don't know, more seats at the table. Maybe we'll figure it out. (laughter)

Q: [01:18:34] Maybe building on that, what is your hopeful vision for the future of Maine's coastal fisheries?

A: [01:18:40] I hope Maine continues to have a robust and thriving coastal fishery. I think the working waterfront is – in so many ways, it's the huge economy of Maine, but it's also the heart and soul of Maine. It's what people think of when they think of the state of Maine. It drives a ton of the tourism. It gives a lot of incredible jobs for people. It gives people a lot of agency in their own lives and flexibility. I just really hope that we can continue regarding that as a very important staple of what this state is and just support people to keep doing it. I think all the aquaculture happening is amazing. I think the way that restaurants, especially high-end restaurants, have really been going out of their way to highlight different aspects of the up-and-coming things that have been going on in the ocean is amazing. I don't know. It's just exciting because that also catches fire inside of people. Someone who's never had an oyster before, and then all of a sudden they realize there's five oyster farms between here and here, and now they have to go to every single one of them and meet the owner and see how they do it. I don't know. That's exciting, and I really hope that lobster can stay on that. But lobster might have to become something like all these other things, where it's even more expensive than it is now, and it's more of a delicacy than it is now, which means it's going to take a lot of promotion, but it's doable. I think people adapting to what's going on is going to be the most important thing, but I feel like we, as Mainers, want that, and feel that, and need that, and we're going to work towards it.

Q: [01:20:29] Great. Thank you so much. Is there anything else you wanted to share with us that we haven't asked you about?

A: [01:20:36] I don't know. (laughter)

Q: [01:20:39] You can think on it for a second. Do you have any follow-up questions or anything we didn't ask about, Jess?

F: [01:20:42] Yeah. I was wondering – you mentioned a little bit about the frequency of storms and waterfront access. How'd you guys make out in the January storms?

A: [01:20:51] So, I did great. I was in the Bahamas (laughter), and my boat was out of the water. Rockport got hammered, but nothing like anywhere else. I was recently out on Vinalhaven, and you can see foundations of the old buildings that have been there for forever, hundreds of years. But one thing that I thought was interesting – Rockport signed up for the Disaster Relief Fund, and everywhere, got some money. But the thing that kind of struck me about it is, apparently, they basically had to build it back to what it was, and they weren't given the funds to build it up more resiliently, which I find weird because we know that this is going to happen more and more and more. So, in my mind, it's kind of like, isn't it going to cost more to do this twenty-seven times than it would be to come up with a strategy? I don't know. Because we know it's going to happen. We're watching it everywhere. I mean, right now, there's three hurricanes in the Atlantic in October. That has never happened. Every year, it's just getting worse. So, that concerns me a lot. I just

think the coastal communities are going to just be continually beaten up. I don't know. I don't know what we do about it. I'm just glad I live on a hill. (laughter)

Q: [01:22:28] I guess I thought of another one. We're really interested in green crabs and what people are trying to do with green crabs. We haven't spoken anybody who's using them in their own restaurant. What's been the reception from customers? Are you telling them a little bit about the story of green crabs?

A: [01:22:46] Yeah.

Q: [01:22:47] Or is it just like, "It's a crab bisque?"

A: [01:22:50] I have been trying to tell everybody about it. Honestly, I'm not the best at that because I'm spending a lot of time doing the physical labor part, but we have been getting more into being better at marketing and advertising, like, "Hey, these are an invasive species. This is what we're doing." But the thing that I love the most is when I'm in there, someone orders – they don't read the description underneath it, which tells you all about it, but they just read "lobster chowder." They're like, "All right, I want that." They'll come up ten, fifteen minutes later. They're like, "That is the best chowder I've ever had. What is in it? What is the secret ingredient?" And I'm like, "Green crabs, the invasive species." But I swear it gives it this velvety, softer – they're a real fatty kind of crab. I don't know. It just takes it to the next level, and people love it. Whether they're interested in the environmental impact of the green crabs, and that is what gets them to try it, or they try it, and they're just like, "This is so good," and then they learn that. Also, I feel like food is a really good way to educate people. It's exciting for me to be able to, A, talk about the lobstering industry, but B, be like, "Hey, this is what's happening in the waters right now. Your diet could help change things. If you eat these, you are doing something good." People feel good about that, so I'm trying to push that.

Q: [01:24:32] Yeah. Do you think that there's potential for green crab – for the markets to develop – if there was more support and development of the market for it to help with diversifying Maine's fisheries?

A: [01:24:45] I definitely do. I think green crab is definitely something that could help with diversifying Maine's fisheries. The thing is that they're affecting everything. They're even affecting the oyster farms, the mussel farms – everything. And they're here. So, it would behoove Maine to get it together, put some funding together, create some sort of market or something for them. One thing I've been considering, but I don't have any experience in – I've been trying to talk to a couple of people. My seafood stock is the bomb. It's the best. I could use way more green crabs if I was just bottling the stock and selling that. But there's a whole lot that goes into figuring that out. But at the same time, that would be a huge – you could go through so many green crabs if you pump the stock out, push it nationwide, something like that. We have to come up with something big. It's got to be big because there's so many of them out there. Unfortunately, again, people need to make enough money to make it worth it to go get them because you do need bait to catch them, whether it be – I mean, it could be literally anything; they'll eat anything.

They're disgusting, but they're delicious. I don't know. It's like a lobster. I think there's huge opportunity there. The fact that you can – I've just been reading that you can use them in compost, which is why I've tried to do that. But they are full of tons of nutrients. They're full of delicious fatty crab essence, (laughter) and then they've also got a lot of meat in them. With lobsters, they're starting to pick them with a pneumatic chamber kind of thing I was reading about. Really weird. But I'm like, what if we tried to put a green crab in there? Would you not have to pick it by hand? Could you just get the meat out that way? Would that be a way to make it –? Because you got to figure out how to make it more commercial, to combat them at all, and to make it make sense. But people are doing stuff like that. That guy – is he in Rhode Island, or is he in New Hampshire? – is making whiskey out of them?

Q: [01:26:57] It's New Hampshire.

A: [01:26:58] Yeah. That's so smart and so weird and so cool and just so niche. I feel like people are like, "Hmm, I got to try that one." And it's such a good idea. I really hope – I don't know. I hope we can figure something out, and I hope I'm part of it (laughter) because it is exciting. Also, when you hate them so much, it gives you drive to just keep going, be like, "All right. I need to figure out how to get rid of fifty bushel of you at a time." (laughter)

Q: [01:27:26] Any follow-ups on that that you want to ask right now?

F: [01:27:28] No, that's awesome.

Q: [01:27:29] Maybe that's a good note to end on then. Awesome.

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