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Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun on a Tuesday. Yeah, on a Tuesday. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today. We've got a great show in store. I love this Christmas party. I love giving you a podcast conversation every day. It's day six of our 2021 Christmas Party. We're halfway through the 12 days in a row of Christmas episodes.

Just imagine we're all like mingling at a little get-together, taking in the beautiful decor, and pause to have a chat with some new friends in there. If you missed the first five days, be sure to go back and listen. Y'all are loving yesterday's episode with Nate Bargatze. Me too. I'm so glad. I really think you're going to love all of them.

The soundtrack of our party is *Little Drummer Boy* from for KING & COUNTRY. It's from the album *A Drummer Boy Christmas*. It's really good. You guys, really, really good. So be sure to check that out.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to take a moment and share about one of our incredible partners, [Mercy Project](#). It's undeniable that human trafficking is a serious problem around the world. But not all trafficking is the same.

In Ghana, Africa, for example, thousands of children are trapped in labor trafficking and the fishing trade for 12 hours a day, y'all. As a result of their dire financial situations, these families have sold their children to fishermen in hopes that that child or children could live another day. Sadly, many of the fishermen were once trafficked as children themselves.

Our partner, Mercy Project, has taken a creative approach to addressing the issue of child trafficking. And they're seeing incredible success. Here's the remarkable work they're doing. They form village partnerships with the fishermen to literally teach a better way to fish that makes them more money and replaces the need for child labor.

This allows the children to be voluntarily released and reunited with their families. Over the last decade, more than 200 children have gone home to live with their families. This is a small but mighty nonprofit that is creating generational transformation in Ghana. But that's where they need our help.

There are currently 50 formerly trafficked children needing a sponsor. For \$45 a month you can empower a formerly trafficked child to receive education and

experience freedom. This month Mercy Project mercy will randomly select a new child sponsor to travel to Ghana with their team in 2022, all expenses paid. You get to meet your sponsor child and their family, see the project firsthand and experience the beauty of Ghana.

Let's help all 50 of these kids start 2022 with hope. Simply text THATSOUNDSFUN to 74121 to help today. Imagine how much this gift will transform communities for good. Text THATSOUNDSFUN to 74121 or visit mercyproject.net/thatsoundsfun.

Intro: Today on the show I get to talk with Aliceson and Barry Bales, the family who run Bales Farms. It's a sixth-generation family farm in East Tennessee that's operated by Grammy-winning musician Barry Bales, his wife Aliceson, and their 14-year-old son, Marshall.

Bales Farms raises grass-finished beef, which we're going to learn about, pasture-raised pork, poultry, and eggs. They provide to families, restaurants, and grocery stores. They use regenerative agricultural methods and they are building healthier soil, growing better grass, and raising happier animals.

Aliceson was blessed to be raised by great cooks and she loves cooking for others. For the Bales, cooking is about spending time unwinding with the food and the music and sitting together at the table and talking and laughing and detailing the day.

Their new cookbook is called *Bales Farms Cookbook*. And y'all, it is such a beautiful collection of recipes and photographs, and stories. I think you're going to love it and love them. So let's graze together at the appetizer table while we hear from our new friends, Aliceson and Barry Bales.

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Annie: Okay, you guys, we've got to talk about Bales Farms because this farm has been in your family since 1882.

Barry: It has. There's a lot of fits and starts but I'm the fifth generation and our son Marshall, he's 14 and actively involved in the farm. He's sixth generation.

Annie: That is unreal. How do y'all trace back? Like do you still have pictures? Do you have stories? How do you know when the whole thing started?

Barry: Well, the main way that we did was the state of Tennessee has a program called a Century Farm program and it recognizes and documents all farms that have been in the same family actively farming for at least 100 years. So in order to get into that program, you have to trace it back or have somebody trace it back.

And we have a neighbor who is really big into that. He researches like Revolutionary War Land Grants and that kind of thing. So he did it for us and went back through. I knew most of it, but to see all the documentation and the maps and everything that was pretty cool.

Annie: Have you always wanted...? I mean, farming isn't your main job, right? Which one-

Barry: Pre-COVID it was not, no, no. I've been a professional musician for 31 years.

Annie: I know. I thought y'all live in Nashville. I was paying attention because I was like, "Well, I mean, Barry's got a bus out of here all the time." Do you just drive over and bus from here?

Barry: I do or fly from here and meet up. It's not uncommon at least when things were still rolling. You know, I'd be in Nashville two or three times a month.

Annie: Will you tell our friends listening who you travel with and all the bands you've been in and with?

Barry: Well, I've been a member of Alison Krauss and Union Station for 31 years. There were a lot of session work in that time, did the *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* soundtrack, played a bunch with Dolly Parton. Was listening to your podcast with Mac Powell yesterday. I was in his country band for a while.

Annie: Oh, yeah. Man, I like that *Southpaw* album.

Barry: Oh, yeah. I didn't tell you, that was... Mac borrowed a Winnebago and a trailer for that tour and we all loaded up like a bunch of gypsies and played every little country bar in the southeast. And it was really hard, but I don't know that I've ever had as much fun on the road in my life.

Annie: Really? I believe it. He's fun to hang with.

Barry: We had a blast. Great group of guys. It was awesome.

Annie: Aliceson, the whole time Barry's out traveling, you're running the farm? Have y'all been living out there this whole time?

Aliceson: Yes. So when we got married 23 years ago, I moved here. I was a physical therapist at that time. That's what my education is. And so I worked full time. And then we had our son Marshall and I went to part-time. And then we decided that we would homeschool and so I started staying on the farm full time. And here we are.

Annie: Where is the farm?

Aliceson: Barry did forget. He has worked a lot with Chris Stapleton. And he never puts that in. He's written a lot with Chris. And they actually won an award for *Nobody to Blame*.

Annie: What kind of award, Aliceson? Tell us. A Grammy?

Aliceson: It was an ACM. Won song of the year.

Annie: Oh, an ACM.

Aliceson: Oh my gosh. And also like raising pigs and also telling us how to stock our bars.

Barry: Yeah, absolutely.

Annie: I mean, y'all are doing all the things. I'm so impressed.

Barry: Way too many probably.

Annie: How far is the farm from Knox? Like, are y'all in a town? Or is it out in the middle of nowhere in Knoxville or where are y'all?

Barry: We're actually an hour from Knoxville. We're about halfway between Knoxville and Bristol.

Annie: Okay.

Barry: We're an hour north of Asheville.

Aliceson: 45 minutes from Dollywood if you ever want to come up.

Annie: Next time I'm coming to Dollywood you know I'm coming over to Bales Farm.

Aliceson: Yeah.

Annie: I want to see it. I want to see it in action.

Aliceson: We would love to have you. You're welcome anytime.

Annie: I do love Dollywood. Y'all know how I feel about that. I just love that place.

Aliceson: Everybody loves Dollywood.

Annie: I know. It's the best. I was wondering if you're close to Sevierville based on... honestly, based on some of the recipes. I thought these are like old family southern recipes in the cookbook.

Barry: We both come from a long line of old-timey southern cooks.

Annie: I mean, Aliceson, tell me how y'all got to where it was time to write the *Bales Farms Cookbook*?

Aliceson: Well, for a couple of years, I've been blogging some recipes. And people would just say, "Why don't you write a book? Why don't you write a book?" And we just never really took the time. And then suddenly, in 2020, we had some time.

So I wrote a few recipes here and there. We would take one step, and then another step, and then another step. And then Dolly said she liked the book and I thought, "Well, I guess that's a sign. We're going forward." So that's how it started. And here we are.

Annie: What made you decide to give your recipes? Because for example, your White Pimento Cheese, that I hope there's some in the fridge right now, you promised it's always there-

Aliceson: It is.

Annie: I mean, that's like a secret recipe and your barbecue recipe you're given away. What made you decide to actually give away these recipes that are so close to your family?

Aliceson: I want to encourage everybody.

Barry: She's a two?

Annie: Oh my gosh. Barry, we speak the same language, my friend. What's your Enneagram number

Barry: I'm a five.

Annie: Oh, I love this so much.

Aliceson: It's a two and a five marriage. You know, that's whoo.

Annie: Wow, you're a five. Okay. Yeah, we're definitely going to be talking.

Barry: I'm a musician and an only child.

Annie: Oh, wow. Aliceson, I have a lot of questions about living with that. I have a lot of questions about living with that. You need a farm. You need some space. You gotta get away. So because you're two, Aliceson, you're like, If it makes people happy, I'll give them a secret White Pimento Cheese recipe.

Aliceson: Yes, yes. I do hate that when people say, "Oh, I can't give you that recipe because it's a secret." Everybody should enjoy great food. And food brings people together. So I want people to fix all the things and enjoy all the things with all their people.

Annie: What was y'all's Thanksgiving like? Did people come out to y'all, did y'all go somewhere else, or how's that look?

Barry: My mom and dad are gone. Aliceson's family's all that's left. But we have them down for Thanksgiving every year. Usually, I'm out at the bar and it's a Big Green Egg, you know, smoking something for two days in a row. But this year, Aliceson said, "Let's do something different." And so she made pasta.

Annie: Uh-uh, you did pasta for Thanksgiving?

Barry: Yeah.

Aliceson: Pasta and bread and salad and lots of desserts.

Annie: How many Thanksgiving after the year your cookbook comes out you did...?

Aliceson: Right.

Annie: You're like, "I've spent the last year and a half getting all these recipes right. Can we just have spaghetti?"

Aliceson: Right.

Annie: That is different. Okay. Barry, talk to me about the Big Green Egg. Is that your go-to? Because one of the things I want to talk about today is kitchen gifting things that we can give to people who are cooking. Is that the one? Is that the one everybody needs at their house?

Barry: Well, it is. All my guy friends told me for years, they're like, "Oh, man, you got to get a Big Green Egg. They're awesome." I've always had a gas grill out back just for quick weeknight stuff and then like a real big time barrel smoker for when I really wanted to take my time and do stuff. And I always thought, "Well, I'm sure they're awesome. I just don't know where I'd put one in the rotation."

Aliceson and Marshall got me one for Father's Day one year, probably three or four years ago. Haven't used anything since other than that.

Annie: Uh-uh.

Barry: Yeah.

Aliceson: And it's the gift that keeps on giving because there's always some little gadget to give. So that's a great gift.

Annie: Oh, really? There's a way to add to it and update it and all these things?

Barry: Yeah.

Annie: Like new thermometers or what kind of things? This is way outside of my knowledge.

Aliceson: Everything.

Barry: Thermometers, utensils. Well, the latest thing that my friends are trying to get his I think it's called some kind of Genie, where you put it on the lower vent and you set the temperature with your app. And it keeps the temperature where it's supposed to go. I think I'm drawing the line there. That just seems like cheating.

Annie: I'm telling you, my producer behind my computer is nodding like crazy about the genie apparently. Does it take some of the purity out of it for you of like having to keep it at a temperature in your own skill?

Barry: Well, yeah. Plus, as a five one of the great things about that is the families in here and I go out there by myself-

Aliceson: I knew he was going to say something about being a five and needing alone time.

Annie: I was thinking you were going to say, "As a five I've done all the research. I know how to keep this the right temperature. I don't need a genie telling me what to do."

Barry: Yeah.

Aliceson: Right. Right. Right.

Barry: I mean, that's the thing about the Egg is you set it, it stays. I haven't seen a lot yet on that one.

Annie: Okay. But a Big Green Egg. So my guess is because it's a farm, there's a lot of... is there multiple barns?

Barry: There are multiple barns. Where I do my grilling we call it the barn. I needed a shop to have my shop and put the four-wheeler and all that kind of stuff. And there again it morphed into something that's probably equal to or greater than the house we live in. It's the party barn. There's an outside patio with a fireplace and all that kind of thing.

Annie: And the Big Green Egg is over there.

Barry: Yeah.

Annie: Oh, I love it. Aliceson, as I read the book, this is the most controversial thing I experienced. Unsalted butter is what you say.

Aliceson: Oh, yes.

Annie: Always.

Aliceson: Yes, always.

Annie: Sister, I love that salted butter though.

Aliceson: I know. It is really good. It tastes really good. And I enjoy it when we are out. But for cooking and baking, I use unsalted because you can always add salt at the end. But you know if you're making chocolate chip cookies or something and you don't want any salt in them, if you're using salted butter the salt is already there obviously.

Annie: Okay, tell me what are some other big tips that you're living by as you're thinking about baking for the holidays? I mean, you're changing my life saying unsalted butter, but you said Martha Stewart taught you. So I believe you.

Aliceson: Yeah, back in the early 90s she taught me.

Annie: In one of her cookbooks?

Aliceson: Yeah, yeah. Another thing that I tell people is when you are getting ready to do meat, take it out of the refrigerator and let it come up to close at least to room temperature so that it all cooks evenly. And when you're doing chicken, if you're doing a whole chicken, which I always encourage people to do a whole chicken, and there's lots of instructions in the book on how to do that, but put those legs to the back of the oven, because that's the hottest part of the oven and it's the darkest meat.

Annie: Oh, there you go.

Aliceson: so it can take the heat better.

Annie: I mean, you're not going to be surprised to hear me say that I like... when I do a whole chicken, I grab it from Costco. And the rotisserie has done the rotisserie work. But you tell us how to cook it in the book. And even the spatchcock way where you busted open and lay it down and all the things.

Aliceson: Yes.

Annie: I mean, how often are you doing a whole chicken versus chicken breast? Are you always doing a whole chicken?

Aliceson: We never do chicken breast. We never do parts and pieces anymore.

Annie: Y'all are so much better than me.

- Aliceson:** Because it takes the same amount of time to do a whole chicken. And then you have everything leftover and then you can make soup with the broth, with the bones. You can do so many things with a whole chicken.
- Annie:** Is it y'all chickens? Do y'all raise your own chickens to eat?
- Barry:** We do. We do about anywhere from 500 to 1,000 a year?
- Annie:** 500 to 1,000 chickens a year?
- Barry:** Yeah.
- Annie:** How in the world do you keep up with that many chickens? And the eggs. Because your son's got an egg company on the side. Right?
- Barry:** Yeah. That's a whole nother set of chickens.
- Annie:** Oh, wait, you're telling me 500 to 1,000 that people eat, and then there's just a separate set of chicken eggs?
- Barry:** Yeah. At one time last spring we had 500 meat birds here. And all this is out on pasture. You know, it's not in a big indoor chicken house like what you're used to seeing on the road. So we had 500 meat birds and Marshall had 400 laying hens that he was taking care of separately.
- Annie:** Oh my. Why is there no minor league baseball team called the Meat Birds? That feels like a perfect name for a team.
- Barry:** That's awesome. Yeah, like maybe Salisbury, Maryland where they have all those chicken houses or somewhere.
- Annie:** That's right.
- Barry:** Batesville, Arkansas.
- Annie:** That's what I'm saying. I'm like, that sounds like a sports team. I mean, do you have employees that are helping you run all this?
- Aliceson:** Oh, we wish.

Barry: Just the three of us.

Annie: The three of you are taking care of 1,000 chickens? We're not even talking... because you also have pigs, right?

Barry: Yeah, yeah.

Annie: Cows? Horses?

Barry: No horses.

Aliceson: No horses.

Barry: We had horses growing up, and I love horses, and I miss having horses, but horses are just a cash outlay. All they do is try to find a way to get hurt. So we don't. Because of the time involved and because of the processing situation for a small farm like us, we usually do about 15 or 20 head of cattle a year and 10 to 20 pigs and then the chickens that we were talking about.

Annie: Wow. Listen, I've never been a farmer as you can tell from my questions. What I've seen on TV is y'all have to get up at like five o'clock in the morning and go feed everybody. Is that your every day?

Barry: No. My musician side has rolled over into my farm.

Annie: You're a night farmer?

Barry: I try to get it to where I don't have to get up too early. Our cattle are grass-fed, grass-finished. So they're on pasture all the time and just eat grass. So I'll usually go out and move them to a new paddock about five o'clock every day. 5 p.m.

When we have the meat birds, which is about that eight-week period, then yeah, that is very labor-intensive. And we have to go out and feed and water and move them first thing in the morning and then again in the evening. But when it's just pigs and cows and egg layers, it's not terribly. The only thing is you got to be here every day. It's not super labor-intensive. And you don't have to do it early.

Annie: It's every day.

Barry: But you can't be gone for two or three weeks.

Annie: Aliceson, what do you know about God that I don't know from being a farmer?

Aliceson: For us, for our business, number one that doesn't really answer the question, but He's always showing up and he'll walk ahead of us. And then He's so kind to come back to us and walk along with us. Even though He's already prepared the way.

But also farming is just a great right way to see Him as creator and sustainer. Because we can't keep these pigs healthy or the chickens healthy. We can't make the chickens lay eggs. And He's so good and kind to sustain their health.

One of our prayers on the farm is that we would always provide nutritious products for people, nutritious and delicious. And He just keeps all of our animals healthy. And it's all Him. I can't do that. We can't do that. And so Him as sustainer, healer to bring people here and show them that through food you can have restored and reconciled relationships.

Annie: Wow.

Aliceson: From the outside of it, it looks like such a small, little thing but really people... when you're getting your food through your car window, if you're going to the fast food, nothing wrong with that, it tastes really good sometimes, but that's a whole different set of feelings than if you prepare a whole chicken or if you are out at the Big Green Egg and you are spending a couple of hours getting everything ready and preparing pizza or preparing steak or whatever. You treat it differently.

You know, you sit around your table with people that you love and you talk and you visit and you dine with them. That brings about healing and reconciliation and slowness and love and joy and peace and all the things that I think that God really wants to show us that sometimes we miss because we're so busy. You know. Does that make sense?

Annie: Oh my gosh, yes.

[00:22:02] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, [Indeed](#). So our teams have been growing this year and every single bit of hiring we've been doing has been with the help of Indeed. Hand to heaven, every team member we have that came through Indeed fits like a glove.

Indeed is a hiring partner that gets you what you really want, a shortlist of quality candidates as fast as possible because you can do it all. Attract, interview and hire all at Indeed. Indeed partners with you on every step of the hiring process so you can find talent with the skills you need through tools like Indeed Instant Match, assessments, and virtual interviews.

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Natalie: Hey, I'm Natalie Grant.

Charlotte: And I'm Charlotte Gambill.

Natalie: We wrote a book called *Dare to Be: God Is Able. Are You Willing?*

Charlotte: And we would love you to get a hold of it.

Natalie: Yes.

Charlotte: But this Christmas we're excited for...

Natalie: Okay, I'm excited because Christmas music is my favorite. And my favorite Christmas song is *O Holy Night*. I just love that song. It doesn't matter. Every time I hear it or every time I sing it, I cry. It's my favorite.

Charlotte: I think my favorite traditional one would be *Hark the Herald*. But I also love *Mary, Did You Know?*

Natalie: Mary, did you know that your baby boy...

Charlotte: Every Christmas we play your album and my kids always go, "Play it, Bernie. Santa Claus is coming to town. Come on. Yes."

Charles: I'm Charles Robinson with theredroad.org, and my favorite Christmas song is *Mary, Did You Know?*.

Annie: And now back to our conversation with Aliceson and Barry.

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Annie: I mean, I would imagine the speed of life that y'all have chosen when it comes to farming. Not even just on a day-to-day but seasonally I mean has to tell you a whole lot about God that I don't know because my life isn't very seasonal like that.

Aliceson: Yeah.

Barry: Totally. We raise meat chickens in the spring and in the summer and we try to have all of our cattle processed by about this time of year. Part of that is to... one, by November or December, so I'm ready for a little break. But also it's to let the land rest, let us rest, let it be restored, and come back bigger and better in the spring. When seasonally, that's when life begins again.

And so I think that's a large part of it is embracing that seasonality and not trying to just go full speed and act like there's no calendar or no seasons and just try to embrace the way things are set up.

Annie: I mean, I don't know a lot of other jobs that are... my job isn't this way. That literally has seasons that the right thing to do for weeks is to let the ground rest. I mean, that's amazing. So when will you get cattle back again? When does that happen? It all kick up in the spring.

Barry: A lot of people do what they call cow-calf operations, which is they have mama cows and they have babies and it's just a cycle. And that's totally fine. We might get into that one day. Right now we're just doing what's called a stocker operation. So I have a farmer friend down the road that raises calves. So we buy weaned calves from him and raise them through the year. We will try to have them here on the ground April 1.

Annie: Oh, wow. And then they'll stay with you until November-ish?

Barry: Yeah, November, December, something like that. Yeah.

Annie: So those of us who don't live close to you, can we buy your chickens? Can we buy meat? I mean, what do you do with your 500 meat birds?

Barry: We so far sell them all locally. regionally. We deliver to Knoxville, Kingsport, Johnson City. We basically got it there. We just haven't really pulled the trigger on being able to ship. So we used to come to Nashville. With all my friends down there, we used to try to make a delivery to Nashville once a quarter. But then when all the shelves got empty back last spring, we couldn't keep up. And so it didn't make any sense. But maybe we'll start that again before long.

Annie: Yeah, come on. You just let me know. I'll take some Bales Farm meat birds. I'm interested in that. One of the quotes from your book I would love for y'all to talk about for all of us, I mean, you kind of mentioned it, Aliceson, talking about fast food, which is, again, fine sometimes if that is what your life needs. But you said in the book, it matters where your food comes from.

In 2021, 2022, it's very hard to know where all your food comes from. Why does that matter to y'all? And why should we prioritize that a little bit in our lives?

Barry: Cheap food is cheap for a reason, right? And food raised... well, I mean, it's just like, you know, this fast fashion, which you've talked about before on the podcast. It's the same thing. You know, are you honoring... we really feel like we are called to either be vegetarians or to honor the animals that we are blessed to raise. And it's a big deal to us to allow these animals to live the life that God wants them to live and to be healthy.

And that means that it's slower and that means that it's going to cost a little bit more than it does at Walmart. But we believe it's worth it.

Barry: Well, you pay for your food either on the front end or the back end. If you're eating nothing but junk and processed food, it may be cheap on front end. Like a \$5 value meal is cheap on the front side, but if you have a steady diet of that on the back end somewhere down the road, you're going to pay for that with your doctor bills, and your hospital visits.

Aliceson: Pharmaceutical.

Barry: Pharmaceuticals. And I get it. I mean, the kind of meat that we raise and the way it's done, when you pay for it upfront, it's expensive. And I know times are hard. It's not. I don't know that it's an either-or situation. Like if you go through the

drive-thru and get your family value meal on the way home, that doesn't make you a bad person at all.

I mean, one of his favorite things to do is go with grandparents to Taco Bell. You know, it's everything in moderation as they say, I guess. And so yeah, we're super passionate about letting our animals live the lives they're meant to live and express their... Joel Salatin says the pigness of a pig needs to come out. They need to be able to do that. They need to be able to route around. They need to be able to wallow in the mud. And, you know, a lot of these big large factory farming operations, it's that. It's a factory. They're just raising widgets.

Annie: When you said earlier, grass-raised and grass-finished, what does grass-finished mean?

Barry: Well, there's different ways, different production methods. Like for us grass-fed, grass-finished is our cows eat grass 100% of the time. Other production methods are grass-fed, grain-finished, which is a more recent standard way of doing things. Like the last few weeks or maybe a month or so before you take your cattle to the processor, you will put them in the barn or the corral or whatever and feed them a lot of corn. Which corn produces fat and marbling in a much quicker time period. Or some commercial beef feed or that kind of thing.

Unless it specifically has grass-fed on the label, most meat that you get, like your hamburger that came from McDonald's or the cheaper cuts at the grocery store are raised at a feedlot. And if anybody's ever traveled through the Midwest, you've passed feedlots and smelled them 20 miles before you got there.

Annie: Yes.

Barry: And they're just fed a highly, very specific diet of grains and various things. They don't ever even see grass, let alone walk around on it or get to eat it. So that seems to me like it's kind of a no-brainer for us in that, well, cows have a rumen and that's made for digesting grass. They don't have a gizzard to grind up corn like a chicken does. So for us, that's our preferred way of raising them is just let them graze and eat grass. That seems pretty simple.

Annie: I mean, it feels like one big story are y'all telling through the cookbook and through the farm is that there's something really good about slow.

Aliceson: Yes.

Barry: There is. I think God has definitely showed me and a lot of people that through... you know, not saying that He brought on COVID. But He's definitely, you know, using it in a lot of our lives to show us and teach us things. This farm thing was my goal to sort of start building it up a little more as kind of an eventual exit strategy from touring. And little did I know that it'd come out a lot sooner than I had expected.

We were talking about this the other day. Honestly, it's really hard work. A lot of my friends are in this same situation, music business or whatever industry they're in. People are working harder than they've ever worked for less money than they've ever made. But it's hard and it can be frustrating and various things, but boy, I'm really content at this stage in my life with the pace. I jokingly say I'm okay with not going any further than the mailbox lightly.

Annie: And that probably takes a minute, doesn't it?

Barry: A little bit.

Annie: To get down there. I heard a pastor recently say that since 2020 it's felt like twice the effort with half the outcome.

Barry: Yeah. Totally.

Annie: And that's what our music people have felt too, I think.

Aliceson: Yeah.

Barry: Yeah. We had a tour with Aliceson that was canceled for the spring. And then the farming business has all sorts of other problems right now. You know, trying to get into a processor is insane. We've been talking to some local processors that are booked up solid through 2024.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Aliceson: Supply chain issues-

Annie: For everybody.

Aliceson: ...in every walk of life.

Annie: It is absolutely fascinating how that... I think you're right, Barry. While we can be frustrated about certain parts of this, I mean, y'all are probably going to experience this with the cookbook, we've experienced with our books that there's a supply chain issue of getting it all printed. And you just go, "Okay, God, you're slowing the whole planet down for some reason. We can't get what we want when we want it. We can't go where we want to go when we want to go there." The speedometer has just gone down a couple of notches, no matter what we do.

Barry: Yeah.

Aliceson: Right.

Barry: Yeah, totally. As I said, I don't necessarily think that he brought this about, but He's definitely going to use it for good stuff.

Annie: That's right. So this leads me, Barry, to the next important thing we should talk about. Stocking our bars at home. While we're talking about life slowing down and everybody struggling.

Barry: That might have been an unnecessary part of the book.

Annie: I do not think so. No, I think that's a very great part of the book. Not a lot of people teach us whether, you know, for our friends listening who are drinkers or who have alcohol in their lives, some of us don't. But what's a couple of things that when you're like, "This is an essential if you're going to have a good at-home bar kind of situation?" What kind of stuff do we need?

Barry: Well, you don't have to have a lot of stuff and you don't have to have super expensive stuff. I'll really like bourbon. If you've got a good middle-of-the-road bourbon or vodka, maybe Gin, a bottle of red, and a bottle of white wine, then you can cover about any entertaining that you're going to do. Everybody that wants anything is probably going to be covered in that with those.

Annie: You're living in a-

Aliceson: And we try to always have a couple of really knock-out, non-alcoholic choices when we have people over because you're right, not everybody has alcohol in their lives. And either side of it is perfectly fun.

Annie: Totally.

Aliceson: And so we just want to offer all the options. So that's why there were some other options in the cookbook too.

Annie: I love it. And y'all put my all-time favorite drink in here, Boulevardier.

Barry: Oh wow. That's my go-to.

Annie: I mean, that is my very favorite. So I loved seeing that. Now, y'all live in an area that can be known for moonshine. But there's no moonshine conversation in this book.

Barry: Well, it a-

Annie: Y'all making that out behind the bar.

Barry: No. We might know some people.

Annie: You might be able to get to it if you needed to get to it?

Barry: There's not as much supply and demand problem on that.

Annie: That's not quite having the chain problem that the rest of the world is having

Barry: Yeah, it's a shorter chain.

Annie: That's right. Oh, wow. I just thought it was really fun. I think there's a lot of our friends who whether they're moving into a new house or a new phase in their life, or they're throwing parties, no one's really teaching us how to have a classy, small bar cart. Everybody's like have 15 bourbons or don't have anything. And it's like, well, what's like a normal family thing to have around if you have alcohol in your life?

Barry: And I commented on that to Aliceson the other night. I was looking at a recipe for some different cocktails. And I was like, "Who has this stuff on hand?" It's all these crafts. And I love craft cocktails and love going to places that make them. But it was like avocado bitters or something.

Annie: Right.

Aliceson: I was like, "Where would you even get that?"

Annie: Right. You're not going to get to drink that tonight because you got to order that from somewhere. It's got to show up.

Barry: Yeah. Simple and classic is good.

Aliceson: Across the board.

Annie: Yes, that's exactly right. Let's talk controversy one more time about barbecue.

Barry: Okay.

Annie: Guys, listen, y'all are tomato bass people, Aliceson. I'm surprised to hear that. I would have thought y'all would lean toward vinegar since you're close to the Carolinas. No.

Aliceson: No. What do you like?

Annie: What's my third option besides tomato and...? Ain't there one more? Tomato, vinegar and...?

Aliceson: Mustard.

Annie: Mustard. So I'm probably a tomato or mustard person more than vinegar person.

Aliceson: Now, when you are on the road with Mac, he's a... Mac Powell is a big barbecue guy.

Barry: He's a big food guy. And he's not picky.

Annie: That's my truth is when it comes from barbecue I'm not super picky. I love it.

Barry: No, just anything. I mean, Mac's three favorite words are "McRib is back."

Annie: That has to ruin your life, Barry that he wants to eat a McRib from McDonald's.

Barry: Yeah, yeah. And still look like he doesn't do these things.

Annie: That's right. That's right. He's got a hollow leg or something.

[00:39:49] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, [Pendulum](#). We are all doing our best to be as healthy as we can. And we all know that nutrition as we are talking about plays a huge role in your life and in your gut health, which is called your microbiome.

We're learning more and more about how gut health impacts your mental and physical well-being. The science is clear that a healthy gut microbiome, you know, with good bacteria that helps our bodies process food is key to a healthy lifestyle. But now we're learning about the connection between your gut health and type 2 diabetes.

Pendulum glucose control is the first and only medical probiotic that's designed to help manage your A1C and blood glucose levels through the help of your microbiome. Pendulum's team of scientists, doctors, and innovators isolated the unique strains of beneficial gut bacteria that help people with Type 2 diabetes manage their blood sugar levels. Ain't that incredible? They've isolated one keystone strain that is now available to purchase.

Pendulum is the only place to find this highly sought-after strain. It's formulated and bottled in the US with the highest safety and quality standards. And pendulum is a non-GMO project verified. Take control of your glucose levels today. Try pendulum glucose control for 90 days. If you're not satisfied with your levels, you'll get your money back.

So visit pendulumlife.com to find out more and use the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN for 20% off your first bottle of membership. That's pendulumlife.com, promo code THATSOUNDSFUN.

[00:41:22] <music>

Lauren: Hey everybody, this is Lauren Akins author of *Live in Love*. And my favorite Christmas song, if I have to choose one, I think would be *The Christmas Song* because every time I hear it, the flood of memories that I have with that song and the nostalgia that I feel around that song and its music, no matter who's singing it, it brings me the most comfort and the most wonderful Christmas memories from my entire life, childhood, all the way through marriage. So I would have to choose that one, I think.

Sally: Hey, my name is Sally Lloyd-Jones, author of *Song of the Stars: A Christmas Story*. And my favorite Christmas song is *Christmas Bells* by Henry Wadsworth

Longfellow. And I love it because it... Well, I'm going to quote it. I mean, you probably know it, but it's so filled with hope.

"I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

And I love it because he had lost his wife. It was the Civil War. His son was deathly ill and he was at his son's bedside and it was the church bells ringing that he penned this. At the start of the hymn he was in despair, and then it turns that God isn't dead and He doesn't sleep. I just love that.

Annie: And now back to finish up our conversation with the Bales.

[00:43:17] <music>

Barry: But yeah, even though we're right on the border with North Carolina, it's different. Aliceson talks about it in the book. There's a famous old-timey barbecue place just up the road called Ridgewood.

Annie: Is it still open? Can we go there when I come visit?

Aliceson: Yes. Yes.

Barry: Oh, absolutely.

Annie: Well, wait line in the snow and all the things they made y'all do?

Barry: Right, right, right.

Barry: Yeah, yeah. You just got to plan accordingly.

Annie: I mean, and they just closed the doors when they're sold out?

Aliceson: Right. Yeah. Just in your face.

Barry: Yeah. They're not Chick-fil-A.

Annie: So when you started making your own barbecue, was that the model for you as you built your own recipe was the Ridgewood one?

Barry: Well, Ridgewood is my favorite, and I think Aliceson kind of being the two she is kind of wanted to make that for me. So yeah, I think she used that as a model and has definitely done well with it.

Barry: And you've got it. I think he has surpassed Ridgewood.

Annie: I was about to say she put in print that you're better than Ridgewood. It's written down.

Barry: I disagree, but I appreciate it.

Annie: Aliceson, tell us when you're thinking about Christmas gifts for people that if they're working on their kitchen or someone... you know, we do a cousin name draw and someone gets the person who wants something for their kitchen. What are the tools you love that we for sure need in our kitchens?

Barry: For my family, what I would say because... now, I will be upfront.

Annie: Okay.

Aliceson: We have a \$30 gift limit in my family per person. So I'm going to look on that end of the spectrum and I'm going to get... you know, everybody needs a really good whisk. And maybe two. Like a large and a small one. Everybody needs... I know people who can't believe this, but they don't have cast iron skillet in their lives. And large cast iron skillet are not that expensive. And you can do a whole lot with cast iron. And so I would go towards that. And now if you have an unlimited budget, the KitchenAid stand mixer is really-

Annie: I was going to say, do you have some KitchenAid?

Aliceson: ...really great. That's my favorite go-to. We do a lot of juicing.

Annie: I read that. You don't have an instapot.

Aliceson: Nope.

Annie: You have a crockpot. There was another thing you did. I was surprised you don't have an instapot.

Aliceson: Yeah, we don't have an instant pot. We don't have an air fryer.

Annie: Air fryer. That was it. I don't have those either, Aliceson. I'm with you. I don't have those either. I use my oven and I use my cast iron.

Barry: And a deep fryer. I do. Michael Pollan said one time, I heard him in an interview, and he said, "You can eat all the junk food you want, but you have to prepare it." So I took that to heart.

Annie: If you figure how to make your French fries, you can eat those fries.

Aliceson: Yes, yes.

Annie: Exactly right.

Aliceson: Especially if you are taking the time to fry them once and then letting them cool. And fry them again. Like you deserve it.

Annie: Oh, is that the trick? A double fry.

Aliceson: Mm-hmm. It's in the book. So for the first time at 300 degrees for about four to five minutes. And then I turn the temperature up to about 400. And I dropped them again. That makes them really great for us.

Barry: They're great.

Annie: Oh, man, I'm glad that's in the book. I'm very excited. I missed the fry section, but I did not miss the dessert section. Don't worry. I saw all those. I saw all those desserts. And people can get your cookbook at your website. Right? Is that correct?

Aliceson: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Balesfarmstn.com.

Annie: Okay. We will put that link in the show notes. It's a great book.

Aliceson: Thanks.

Annie: As soon as it got to the office, we just sat around the... we have a table we call the double-wide because it's two tables put together, we sat around the double-wide and just talked through the whole cookbook.

Barry: That's awesome.

Aliceson: Thanks.

Annie: So y'all did an amazing job.

Barry: I'm going to brag on Aliceson a little bit. We just found out this week, it's on the year-end Garden & Gun favorite cookbooks of the year.

Annie: Aliceson, that is a huge deal.

Aliceson: Yeah. It's so exciting.

Annie: Oh my gosh, that is so exciting. Garden & Gun doesn't play. I mean, if it's Southern, they're going to tell you.

Aliceson: Yeah, that was a really great surprise.

Annie: That is amazing. What did you do when you found out, Aliceson?

Aliceson: Well, we were loading in beef in the walk-in freezer and a friend sent it to us. We thought she was kidding. It was exciting. It was really a fun surprise.

Barry: Yeah. I think we did jump up and down.

Annie: Yes, I would have too. I wish they knew I existed. I love Garden & Gun. So that is amazing. I mean, to me, when I'm thinking about our friends listening who will be getting this cookbook, I mean, this is great for those of us who grew up down here that like know these recipes or know these meals, but don't know how to make it. But also for people around the country who just would like a really good cookbook.

And it's not hard. You didn't put anything in here that again with avocado bitters. I mean, there's nothing in here that you can't get at your local grocery store or from a local farmer.

Barry: Yeah. I think she did really well on that in that, yeah, you don't have to get on some specific website and order some real specific thing. It's all stuff that you're going to have or can easily get at your local grocery store or your local farm. It's easy, and it's not all these strange techniques, and you don't have to be a trained chef. So it's comfort food, but it's not just a whole bunch of casseroles thrown together. It's good, elegant stuff, but it's easy.

Annie: It does have that poppyseed chicken though, because how dare we not?

Barry: Yeah.

Annie: And everybody needs to know about that poppyseed chicken.

Aliceson: Yes.

Annie: Okay, I got two more questions for you. We're asking all of our guests what their favorite Christmas song is since this is the 12 days of Christmas. So what is y'all's favorite Christmas song?

Aliceson: Do you want to go first?

Barry: Go ahead.

Aliceson: I should probably pick something that talks about Jesus a lot.

Annie: Mine is *Thistlehair The Christmas Bear* by Alabama, so don't worry.

Barry: When you said that I was like, yeah, I know that. I know that. I mean, they played it all the time here in East Tennessee, but *Hard Candy Christmas* by Dolly. The original one.

Annie: Yes. Yes. The original Dolly.

Aliceson: There's been a lot of people who have recorded it, but she is the queen for a reason.

Annie: Yes, that's right. What about you, Barry?

Barry: Well, I'm one of those guys. I know a lot of people that are what I call Christmas people that they're ready to put their tree up on Labor Day. And I'm not that way at all. But once I turn the corner and get into the spirit and see that it's what I would think is Christmas season, I go full-on. I love Nat King Cole. I love Glen Campbell's Christmas record, Merle Haggard's Christmas record, everybody, Leon Redbone.

But I thought long and hard about this. Just for the way it makes me feel and sort of sets up that okay, it's Christmas time, I have to say Robert Earl Keen, *Christmas From The Family*.

Annie: Wow. That is a surprise. Okay, that's a great answer. No one has said that all year. We've asked every guest this entire year and I don't think anybody said either of y'all's answers. Well done.

Aliceson: That's a fun one.

Barry: Oh, yeah.

Aliceson: The original again.

Barry: Yeah, Robert Earl version. Yeah.

Annie: I say Enneagram five dream right there. You're the only one has ever told us that. So well done. You brought something that was unique. No one else thought of it. Well, is there anything we didn't talk about the owner make sure we cover?

Barry: I think that's pretty-

Aliceson: Dolly. Do we need to say that everybody who gets the book-

Annie: She wrote the foreword.

Aliceson: She wrote the foreword, and you get her signature in the book. So that's worth it.

Annie: Yes, that's worth it. The idea that y'all really know her blesses me. That I'm this close.

Barry: She is unbelievable. I have recorded on her albums and done a lot of TV stuff with her in the past. But honestly, when we sent this to her, I put a cover letter in it, you know, basically introducing myself saying, "Hey, I don't know if you remember,

blah, blah, blah." And she's the busiest woman on the face of the earth. She's Dolly. I mean, that's kind of has its own definition with it.

And she wrote us back. She sent the foreword, but she also wrote a cover letter to it in response and said, "Couldn't have been any more gracious. Take this and use it however you want, cut it up, edit it, do whatever you want. What she says in the foreword, I didn't remind her of any of that. She remembered everything.

Annie: Wow.

Barry: She's unbelievable.

Aliceson: I've always said that she is an angel in our time. But she's such an example to me of Jesus, that she just wakes up and lives every day to be a blessing to someone else who can't do anything for her. I can never... How can I pay her back for saying such nice things about our book? But that's Dolly. She's just so kind and generous and good.

Annie: I know. I know.

Aliceson: So great.

Annie: We will all hang out at some point. Maybe in heaven, but if not before that. Okay, the last question we always ask. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to y'all.

Aliceson: Me?

Barry: Yeah.

Aliceson: Well, so I'm two, so those pictures in the book that our friend-

Annie: Ah, beautiful.

Aliceson: ...and photographer, Tina Wilson, that's it for me. A big table with all the people that we love around it and having real authentic, deep meaningful conversation, just fellowship with the people that I love and do life with. That to me is having people here doing that.

Barry: I should have gone first. Mine is not going to be near that.

- Annie:** I can't wait. No, Barry, I can't wait.
- Barry:** This is the kind of thing where I would say, I want to guess your favorite book is the Bible. I'm an avid hunter. I like to hunt. I've got a lot of bucket list things. One of the things that has sounded fun to me is to start duck hunting in Canada in September and just follow the migration as it goes through the season down to Louisiana.
- Annie:** How long would that take?
- Aliceson:** A long time.
- Barry:** It would take basically September through January.
- Annie:** Oh my gosh. Hey, Barry, I support it. I totally get it.
- Barry:** I didn't say I was going to do it though.
- Annie:** I mean, you could at some point. Maybe weekends. You could find a weekend and catch up with birds.
- Aliceson:** You would miss all of the UT football season.
- Barry:** That's true.
- Aliceson:** See, you've got it going on-
- Barry:** In the past that hasn't been a problem. Now, it's getting to where it might be something we pay attention to.
- Annie:** Listen, I was in college in the early 2000s, in 98, I remember what Tennessee can be like when Tennessee is good and scary.
- Barry:** I hope we're on our way back on it. That's kind of the only way we've got to go.
- Annie:** It feels like you are.
- Aliceson:** Listen, you all are on a great run.
- Annie:** I know. Let's hope. Oh my gracious! That SEC Championship though.

Aliceson: Georgia is having a great year.

Annie: I got big hope for us at the end of this year next year, but I don't know. I have to temper my excitement, especially after Alabama gave us "the what" for last weekend.

Aliceson: Yes, that was Alabama.

Barry: That's just what they do, unfortunately.

Annie: I saw a Twitter account that said Nick Saban waited three months to tell us that nothing's changed. I was like, "That is not true." Y'all thank you for making time for this today and for being on the show. I appreciate it so much. I can't wait for our friends to get the Bales Farm Cookbook.

Aliceson: Thank you.

Barry: Thank you. It's been a pleasure to be here and thanks a lot for having us.

Aliceson: Yeah, thank you for having us.

Annie: Absolutely loved it. Really loved it.

[00:56:02] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't you love them? My gosh. I think the world of them. I'm like dying to get to that farm. But between now and then, I can cook out of the *Bales Farms Cookbook*. You guys have got to get a copy. It is so beautiful. You get it from their website. So go there. You can see the link in the show notes. And make sure you follow Bales Farms, tell them thanks so much for being on the show.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. You can't get away from me right now, you guys. 12 shows in a row. I'm Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that's how you can find me.

And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you and I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me, you know what, I want to play around the TENZI. Do y'all know that game, TENZI? That sounds so fun to me. I'm going to call one of my friends today, see if she wants to play TENZI over FaceTime. She lives in Colorado.

Y'all have a great day. We'll see you back here tomorrow for day seven of the 12 days of Christmas with a really fun conversation with every person who works here with us. Y'all are always telling me you love hearing from the team and want to get to know them better. And tomorrow is your chance. So we'll see you back here tomorrow with all the people who have to work with me. I'll see y'all tomorrow.

[00:57:20] <music>

Jonathan: Hi, I'm Jonathan Pokluda, author of *Outdated* and my favorite Christmas song is Oh Holy Night.

Christy: Hey, I'm Christy Wright, author of *Take Back Your Time: The Guilt-Free Guide to Life Balance*. My favorite Christmas song is Mariah Carey, *All I Want for Christmas Is You*.

MŌRIAH: My name is Moriah. My EP is called *Live at the Quarry*. And my favorite Christmas song is *Feliz Navidad*. And I think that's the case because when I was seven years old, I did a choreographed dance with my cousins to this song and performed it for all of my family. And I am embarrassed to say that I made up all the words. I didn't know the words. I still don't really know the words. I know that people see me and they're like, "Oh, you speak Spanish." I'm like, "No, not really." So to this day, I will just mumble the song but I love it.