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**Annie:** Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm really happy to be here with you today. Happy Father's Day this weekend to all the dads and father figures out there, coaches, pastors, teachers. We are so thankful for all the men who are helping lead the next generation.

I hope your people celebrate you so well this weekend, dads, and we have got a great show in store for you. Listen, we've been thinking about you. And this is the one. I mean, this whole month has been thinking about dads but today we are really doing it. And for you gals who love to barbecue, listen, we're out there too. I know. I see you. I see you. We're all gonna love it.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to take a moment to share about one of our incredible partners. This podcast is sponsored by BetterHelp Online Therapy. Sometimes life gets a little wild, doesn't it? So much to balance: home, family, friends, work, church, physical health, and processing what's going on in the world. It can be a lot.

And when we don't deal with the things that feel overwhelming, it can cause us to feel burned out. When fatigue or feelings of helplessness or lack of motivation start to creep in, those are the signs that we may need to ask for help. And one of the ways we can guard against burnout is with therapy. I'm so, so grateful for the ways my counselor has helped me process overwhelming seasons in my life. It is honestly something I want everyone to get to experience. You can find it through BetterHelp.

BetterHelp is customized online therapy that offers video, phone, and even live chat sessions with your therapist. So you don't have to see anyone on camera if you don't want to. It's much more affordable than in-person therapy and you can be matched with a therapist in under 48 hours. Give it a try and see why over 2 million people have used BetterHelp Online Therapy.

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**Intro:** Today on the show I get to talk with my friend and one of my culinary heroes for real in this town, Pat Martin. Pat's a Nashville restaurateur and at the founder of Martin's Bar-B-Que Joint and Hugh-Baby's BBQ & Burger Shop. He's a leader in authentic American barbecue and one of the few pitmasters still carrying the torch of West Tennessee's whole hog.

Today there are multiple Martin's locations across Nashville, Louisville, Birmingham, and Charleston and three outposts of his Hugh-Baby's BBQ & Burger Shop. His new cookbook is so cool. Y'all I'm telling you our office went bananas about this thing. It's called *Life of Fire: Mastering the Arts of Pit-Cooked Barbecue, the Grill, and the Smokehouse*.

It's divided into seven sections, each focused on a specific stage of the Fire's life. And y'all It is fascinating. You're going to love it, and you're going to love Pat. So I can't wait to dive in. So here's my conversation with Pat Martin.

[00:02:58] <music>

**Annie:** Pat, thanks for joining us today on That Sounds Fun.

**Pat:** Well, thanks for having me. I'm glad to be here.

**Annie:** Gosh, I need you to know my family was in town for Mother's Day and one of the must-stops when the Downs come to town is Martin's Bar-B-Que.

**Pat:** I appreciate it.

**Annie:** I mean, you showed up with Martin's Bar-B-Que cup. Do you eat every day?

**Pat:** Martin's?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Pat:** No.

**Annie:** No?

**Pat:** No way. No. No. No restaurateur eats his own food.

**Annie:** Rarely? Ever?

**Pat:** It's not ever. I mean, I taste my food every time I'm in a store, but I don't eat my food other than I'll eat a whole hog sandwich and slaw. And every now and again I might get, you know, couple ribs or something like that. But when you're around your stuff every day, it's not that you're sick of it or tired of it, it's just not appealing. I don't know how to explain it. But a restaurateur chef will tell you that. You just... I don't know.

**Annie:** So you've got 10 Martin's Bar-B-Ques right now, right? Ten stores?

**Pat:** Nine.

**Annie:** Nine.

**Pat:** Yeah, COVID got one of them up in Kentucky.

**Annie:** Really?

**Pat:** Yeah

**Annie:** I think you are the first chef we've had on since COVID. Will you talk about it a little bit, the week it all started in 2020 when you realize everybody's gonna stay home?

**Pat:** Well, the first thing that comes to mind is there was a very surreal moment when I had at the time, I don't know, 700 and something with salaried employees, everything. I had to fire 607 in one day.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh!

**Pat:** And I didn't know how to do that. You know, there was no training for that. There is no YouTube video for that. And I was very surreal. I had made the decision to shut my downtown spot down, the one with a beer garden. And me and my COO, like just my executive team if you want to call it that, none of us wear suits.

**Annie:** We don't either.

**Pat:** We wear freakin' jeans and t-shirt. So I want to preface that. But we like everybody else was like, "Is this a two or three week thing? Is this a longer term thing?" I always thought it was a longer-term thing. I was sending out way... I don't know why I did or not... You know, I don't read tea leaves but I always had a feeling this is going to be something that none of us had really experienced before. Maybe that's just the restaurant too.

Or maybe it's the only part of my life that I'm cynical as the restaurant business owner. So I'm optimistic. But you're just trying to look for things that can hurt your cash flow. So anyway, I shut it down. And we were all sitting in there having beers and a glass of wine, and just kind of like, "What do we do now?" And it was eerie. It was very eerie. Like just downtown there was no sirens, there was no bustle, there was no... And to be sitting in there on whatever it was, it was a mid-day day, like just-

**Annie:** Nobody!

**Pat:** You know, birds who... You know, I've got some birds off my beer garden and they were sitting in their net. That was it.

So yeah, that's the first thing that comes to mind. And then I never either had or gave myself a choice to stay home. I never stayed home. I couldn't. I had to figure out how to keep our business open while still keeping myself safe, while still keeping my staff safe and servicing folks because, you know, so many places closed. There was nothing in the groceries. You're like, "Well, what am I gonna eat?" And I dealt with that too from the groceries from my end.

**Annie:** Oh, yeah, sure getting them.

**Pat:** So I stripped my menu down and we completely moved stuff around inside the dining rooms obviously. We shut down and curbside pickup became a big thing. We had some familiarity with that because we're in the drive-thru business in a few stores. But it was still hard. You know, I put all my executive staff, "Everybody get your apron back on, we're gonna get back in the restaurants."

**Annie:** Wow.

**Pat:** That's what it was. So that was it. It was hard, very weird, very surreal, very stressful, exciting—without making light of COVID. But it felt like it did back in the day when I first opened Martin's we had... I was shooting from the hip constantly. And I have ADD like really bad. Like legit ADD, not what everybody says just because they can't pay attention sometimes.

So that's my safe zone. That's where I feel most comfortable was in those moments where there's no plan and having to go on the fly. So that was, I guess, fun but the rest of it was not fun.

And calling bankers and telling them I couldn't service my debt and what do I do? I called my bankers every couple of weeks just to tell them, "Hey, I'm here," because I never wanted my bankers to have to be... I knew that pretty much everybody else just by human nature they were calling them asking what's going on? So I was very transparent with them and just would literally text them sales numbers, like how little and minuscule they were, but just to show like, "Hey, man, I'm freaking trying here." That was it.

**Annie:** The one I frequent the most is Belmont? I mean, I bet we didn't go back inside for over a year probably, right?

**Pat:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Yeah. I mean, we were doing that curbside something fierce! How do you feel now on the other side of us not going in the restaurants? On the other side of this, what did you gain in all that?

**Pat:** Well, we definitely gained... There's an old adage in the restaurant business: you get rich counting your pennies. And it definitely taught my staff to get back to every single to-go couplet cost money. So that was good for them. That's why I did my DNA because as an entrepreneur once you go out on your own and risk everything, which is what I did in 2006, everything costs money. The air costs money. So that was a good lesson for them.

Now coming out of it, I mean, we are I would say probably 95% back in regards to... I don't just mean sales. I mean like feel and vibe and folks going around and, you know, back to normal. We're still not 100% back because the labor issue is really hard. So many people left and doing the great resignation as they call it was very true.

And getting a lot of people in the hospitality business who dreamed about doing something else in their life actually tried to go do it. And a lot of them did. And a lot of them will never come back. But most of us that are in this business are wired for this business. So we're starting to see a lot of them start to come back. Because going and getting your degree or doing whatever that you really like to do is fun, but if you're not wired that way, and you don't want to get out of bed to do that, then you are who you are. That's still tricky, but we're in a lot better place than we were last year and definitely two years ago.

**Annie:** When you opened... What year did you open the Belmont one? Do you remember?

**Pat:** I opened that on St. Patrick's Day of 2015?

**Annie:** I probably was there March 18th. I mean, we were there pretty quick. It smelled like it had been a barbecue restaurant for 30 years. How did you do that? How would you make it feel...? Because I grew up in Georgia. I grew up going to a barbecue place that had sawdust on the floor. And you made that place feel as nostalgic as my childhood barbecue places.

**Pat:** I appreciate it. There was no conscious intent to do that. I mean, when you're cooking a whole hog, and I've got that pit in the middle of the dining room for all intents and purposes, it's kind of hard for it not to smell that way. I've never tried to run away from smoke, you know, meaning that we'd still weekly get complaints about, you know, "I came in to eat and-

**Annie:** I left smelling like Martin's.

**Pat:** My suit jacket, I went back to my office smelling like smoke, and I don't care. Because real barbecue joints are a little smoky inside and they do run out of food every day. All those things. So I guess it's just the nature of the brand. I appreciate you saying it. But there was no conscious intent to make it feel like we had been open and operating for decades. No.

**Annie:** It is the thing I say behind your back the most is I don't know how you made Martin's feel, particularly, Belmont one, but all of them feel this. But I do not know how you made it feel like it's been there forever.

**Pat:** Thank you.

**Annie:** It's just incredible. And delicious. And people need to know if you don't get there early the brisket is not what you're gonna get for dinner if you don't get there.

**Pat:** No.

**Annie:** My parents, I mean, I bet we ate at five last Saturday because they wanted brisket. I was like, "All right, we're old and..." because they wanted the brisket.

[00:12:23] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our incredible partners, [Indeed](#). What's the saying? That you're the average of the five people you spend the most time with? Well, if that is true, we want to be very intentional about the people we work with knowing how much time we spend together.

When you want to improve your work life, you surround yourself with the best people you can find. So how do you find them? You need Indeed. Indeed is the hiring platform where you can attract, interview, and hire all in one place. Instead of spending hours on multiple job sites searching for candidates with the right skills, Indeed is a powerful hiring partner that can help you do it all.

Find great talent faster with their time-saving tools like Indeed Instant Match, assessments, and virtual interviews. With Instant Match, over 80% of employers get quality candidates whose resumes on Indeed match their job descriptions the moment they sponsor a job according to Indeed Data in the US. I cannot stress enough how impressed we've been here at Downs Books and the That Sounds Fun Network with the people that Indeed has connected us with.

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**Sponsor:** And I have one more amazing partner to tell you about that y'all talk to me about all the time, [Prose](#). Prose uses their signature personalization process and premium natural ingredients to create the world's most customized haircare available. By analyzing over 85 personal factors through their online quiz, y'all know we love a quiz, Prose determines a unique blend of ingredients to treat your exact concerns.

Now, this is what you know. This is the stuff you know. There are no pop quiz surprises here. It's about the area you live in, the climate, your hair goals, your nutrition habits. You're going to get a 100 on this quiz. Do not worry.

But like I said, I love a quiz. But when it results in personalized haircare products that have delivered the shine, growth, and manageability I was hoping for, love isn't even strong enough word to describe how I feel about Prose, you guys. Prose has given over 1 million consultations with their in-depth hair quiz. I bet there's thousands of us who've done it. And you can be one million and one.

And then with a review and refine feature, which I love, you can tweak your formula for any reason. Like a change of address or a hair color or diet. I haven't actually needed to alter my formula because Prose nailed it on the first try, but I love that they want to keep improving when it's needed.

If you're not 100% positive Prose is the best haircare you've had, they will take their products back, no questions. As a carbon-neutral certified B Corp, Prose is an industry leader in clean and responsible beauty. All their ingredients are sustainably-sourced, ethically gathered, and cruelty-free. And they're the first custom beauty brand to go carbon neutral. Let's go!

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And remember that the links to all of our sponsors are in the show notes, but we'll email them to you on Friday as well if you sign up for the AFD Week in Review email. That link is in the show notes as well.

And now back to our conversations with Pat Martin.

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**Annie:** Were you working on *Life of Fire* during the pandemic?

**Pat:** Yeah. They reached out and asked me to do this book the last week of 2016. So call it '17. I went through a writer who was a very close friend of mine who was going through some things and I had to go find a new writer through Clarkson Potter. So I really didn't really get going until '18.

And I did everything backwards too because I started by telling them... I was very humbled. You know, like, I know the editor and I was like, "Francis, why do you want me to do a book? That was like legit. Like I was so honored but so I'm not really sure I'm the guy you really want to do this, you know, because..."

But anyway, once I got through that, I just told him what I didn't want the book to be. And I did not want the book to be a recipe book. I did not want the book to be... I want it to be a procedural book. A book that was a teaching book, not just "here's 150 recipes," all that—the same old carbon copy cookbook that comes out.

And I told him I wanted it to be a procedural book, and I wanted a deep dive on things, and I wasn't going to give up ground on some stuff, which we agreed to. And then later the sales team from Clarkson tried to get me to do that.

**Annie:** I believe it.

**Pat:** But usually you write your recipes. I had a writer with me because I'm running a company so I don't have the bandwidth. And he's a great guy, Nick Fauchald. We became very good friends. But most cookbooks are the writing happens and then they just pawn it out to some photographer they have on staff.

**Annie:** Sure.

**Pat:** And the photographer most of the time never even meets the writer or the author.

**Annie:** Oh gosh



**Pat:** In this case, that was not going to happen with me. I had my photographer in mind. His name is Andy Lee. He is absolutely gifted. He's down in Atlanta. In that progression, like, write the book, write your story, whatever, here's the recipes, handed in. I made her pull her hair out because I started with the photos.

**Annie:** What? You started with the photos?

**Pat:** Yes. And we did a year and a half worth of photography before we ever started really even writing the book.

**Annie:** You are kidding me. So you just had Andy come up and you said, "Follow along. I'm gonna cook the hog?"

**Pat:** Yeah. It really caused my writer, Nick, a tremendous amount of headache because there's writers there in the business, like, "I got three or four books a year and I can do... Bam, bam, bam." I just didn't care. I was like, "Well, if I'm gonna do a book, I'm pouring it all in and I'm going to do it. The pictures have to tell the story on par with the verbiage and not as some ancillary compliment."

So I started with the photography. Big, huge photoshoots, lots of work, lots of people to get them done. Because there's nothing in this book that's not our choice. You know what I'm saying?

**Annie:** I just turned to a big spread with Duke's mayonnaise in it. It's gotta be Dukes, right?

**Pat:** 100%.

**Annie:** I agree. Okay, I mean, Hellmann's in a pinch.

**Pat:** That's why the label is pointing forward.

**Annie:** You were like, "I will tell y'all what it is. That's right. Pictures first. That is fascinating. I don't know anybody who does that. Every cookbook writer I know gives the recipe and then someone's got six pictures the recipe?"

**Pat:** Well, that's because that's how recipe books are done. This was a storybook. Most barbecue books, and this is again going back to what I told him I didn't want it to be, are really the same old book every Father's Day or summer they come out. And not make fun, it's like, you know, Mango marinated, mango bourbon marinated baby back ribs wrapped in foil and just all this stupidity.

**Annie:** Right.

**Pat:** That's the antithesis of what I wanted this book to be. I wanted this book to be about olden school, West Tennessee pit barbecue. There's no smokers in this book, there's no beef in this book because that's not what traditionally in the south we did east of the Mississippi River. Now everybody does and they sell pork in Texas and we serve brisket in Martin's.

But anyway, I just dove deep into pit barbecue with West Tennessee whole hog being the backbone, so to speak. We also went into and did an open-pit barbecue, which is the oldest form of barbecue on the planet. And spit barbecue, hog on the ground, and then some grilling stuff on the side. And then of course cold smoking.

But most barbecue books that are out there that even bothered to put whole hog in the book treat it like it's a one-page recipe, like it's a cookie recipe. Like, "150 pound whole hog or even less than that, which is, you know, 925 pound pig with your butcher, and need this much salt and this much this and build a fire and cook it for 12 hours and then you're done." That's impossible. It just doesn't work that way. That's like me spending one page on telling you how to go skiing.

**Annie:** Right.

**Pat:** Like all I do is do my wedge and I just go down. That's all you do. You just do that.

**Annie:** Speaks the wedge the whole way down.

**Pat:** And you know what's going to happen? You're not gonna get down the mountain.

**Annie:** Right.

**Pat:** So they just gloss over it. And it always ticks me off. Nobody ever really puts the time in too like talking about, "Here's how you do this as if I was there with them. That's what I wanted to hear. So the whole hog recipe in there alone is 33 pages.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh, it is so much. It's the whole middle section of the book. How did you come up with the outline of the age of the fire? The birth you-

**Pat:** That is actually credited to Jim Myers, who was my first writer who's here in town. Jim is the one who put that together. I get more compliments on that. Jim is still a part of them. He and I are still very... I mean extremely close friends. He's still very much a part of this book even though his name is not on the cover.

**Annie:** I mean, that is a... Yes, I will compliment him as well for that, because that is such an interesting way to outline all of this. So you also put the turkey in here, which is your friend Annie's personal favorite, the turkey. And you put the coleslaw. You

gave away these recipes that we can go eat. What's that? How's that worked for you if you give us the recipes?

**Pat:** It's the man who taught me how to cook barbecue, Harold Thomas had no secrets. He was transparent and open with me about whatever. And I'm the same way as anybody else. So I think people who have secrets and have some secret rob and secret sauce and secret this and secret that are stupid. It's a complete waste of time. It goes against everything that should be about food.

If you have some knowledge about food, or really about anything, but some knowledge about food specifically, in my case, you should be open and willing to give it to somebody who's a willing student. Anybody want to go make it, go make it. It's not just the recipes are in there. It's the procedures that if you really wanted to put a value on something's more valuable as stinkin recipe, it's, "Now here, here's how you go cook this whole hog. Go open up your own whole hog joint. You know what? I hope they do. I mean, it's fun.

**Annie:** How did you give your life to this? I mean, I can't imagine that when you were a teenager you thought, "I think for my whole life I'll make barbecue." When did it switch from a job to like, "This is one of the reasons I'm on this planet"?

**Pat:** I did buy my first grilling books in high school. And one of them was *Thrill of the Grill*. I bought them the same day. One was *Grilling* by Joe Famularo, whoever he is, and another one was *Thrill of the Grill* by Chris Schlesinger and John Willoughby, who are... Willoughby is executive editor at Gourmet and Chris was a very well-known chef at the time back in the 90s, you know, before food television really. Like he was big time. And I grilled through that book and cooked through that book-

**Annie:** As a teenager?

**Pat:** Yeah, really my senior year and my freshman, sophomore, all the way through college, I cooked that book. Messed everything up, cooked it again, messed it up. I knew that at some point I wanted to do this. I just thought I would go on with my old Wallstreet career and have a comfortable life and somewhere around 50, which I just turned, would just open up a barbecue joint. God didn't have it planned out that way. It was a little bit rougher path to get there. But I knew then that one way or the other I wanted to do it.

**Annie:** What I noticed more in Nashville than anywhere else I've lived is that the restaurants make our culture here.

**Pat:** Very much.

**Annie:** And Martins is such a central part of who Nashville is.

**Pat:** Oh, thank you. I've never thought about it that way but thank you.

**Annie:** Yeah. To me, you're one of the voices that is shaping our culture. I'm like, you couldn't have known?

**Pat:** Annie, that's some heavy stuff. I don't want that weight.

**Annie:** It's a gift, man. It's a gift to us.

**Pat:** Oh, thank you.

**Annie:** Man, I think a lot of times when people think about why God made them or what a city that is growing looks like, they think about really serious like, "Well, I'm gonna go do this on the street corner. I'm gonna go be a pastor. I'm gonna go be a teacher. And you go like, "Well, what about the people who are feeding all of us?" Those people are making culture in ways and making us feel a way that really matters to me.

**Pat:** So food your emotions.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Pat:** I do agree with you on that. It's a very, very, very strong and powerful point that it does shape us because what it's doing is, is touching on something that affected us usually when we were adolescents. You know, some smell or some tradition our family had Sundays after church or whatever, going to a barbecue joint or favorite barbecue joint in my case, whatever it is. So that's why it's so powerful.

**Annie:** Me too. That one with the sawdust on the floor got all in my sandals as a kid made me nuts. But the grilled cheese was great. When I'm thinking about Father's Day this weekend, a lot of our friends, I mean, I told them that as soon as I got your book that they need to go ahead and get the book, but tell me the next... So they're putting something together for their dad or for their husband who's a dad, they get a copy of *Life of Fire*. And what's the other thing they need to be a good barbecue dad?

**Pat:** I think the easy thing is to talk about some certain tool or this, sort of the other. But honestly, the biggest thing, if I could give somebody something, would be to go ahead and go mess it up and do it again.

**Annie:** Just do it.

**Pat:** And just do it over and over again. You know, order Domino's. But in all honesty, there is not a lot of stuff in that book that's... You can't dumb it down to a Weber grill or some of the grilling stuff you can with the barbecue stuff. You can cook a pork on a Weber grill, but that's not why we do this. So I would give somebody with just go out and do it. You know, burn a hole in your yard?

**Annie:** Just make a pit and go for it.

**Pat:** Just do whatever you have to do, but just figure it out and go do it at least once. And the biggest thing on what I'm saying is set the fear aside. Set what everybody's gonna think about your ribs being messed up or your open-pit chicken or whatever. Set it aside, be transparent. Let everybody know like, "Hey, I'm trying this out. It might suck. I hope it doesn't. If it does, we'll just all laugh."

**Annie:** Dominos.

**Pat:** Yeah, or whatever. But that's really the biggest thing that gets in the way of people trying anything is the fact that they're afraid they're going to be bad at it. And then they start thinking about the fact that if anybody finds out how bad I am at it, they're gonna be embarrassed. So they stop themselves from doing it.

**Annie:** I don't know if you know this answer because you've always been a guy and I've always been a girl. But I wonder if men struggle with that more than women?

**Pat:** I would bet we struggle with it as much as women do, yes. Probably actually more because we all have our insecurities, whichever sex you are but let's call like it is. Men's egos are glass fragile.

**Annie:** Particularly probably when it comes to barbecue, huh?

**Pat:** For anything that you're supposed to be good at as a man. There is that fragility there. Don't be afraid of it; celebrate it.

[00:29:12] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting one more time to tell you about another amazing partner, [Rothy's](#). Have you ever seen someone wearing a colorful pair of flats and thought, "Dang, those are cute!?" There is a good chance they might have been Rothy's.

I ask people a lot and I am right a lot. Rothy's are the perfect cheese for commuting and traveling. Everyone notices them. They're known for their chic pointed-toe flats but that is the tip of the iceberg as far as all the incredible options they offer. They have tons of iconic head-turning designs and bright but sophisticated colors.

Plus Rothy's works great with every outfit. You can wear them with your soft pants. They feel just as cute as when you dress them up for a night out. They're insanely comfortable, almost like a slipper. And you know how I feel about a slipper.

And Rothy's takes sustainability to that next level. All their products are knit with thread made from plastic water bottles. They've repurposed around 125 million water bottles so far. It's my favorite thing about them.

I love my Rothy's. I have multiple pairs. And y'all they go with everything and are so comfy. You know when your feet feel as good at the end of the day as they did when you first slide them into your shoes? Yes, that's what you get with Rothy's. Your new favorite shoes are waiting.

Discover the versatile styles you can wear absolutely anywhere and get \$20 off your first purchase at [rothys.com/soundsfun](https://rothys.com/soundsfun). That's rothys.com/soundsfun for \$20 off your first order.

**Sponsor:** And one last amazing partner I get to tell you about, [Stitch Fix](https://stitchfix.com). Okay, here's the thing. Shopping for clothes can be a little much sometimes. I mean, it's why I needed a village to get dressed for the K-Love Fan Awards. You never know if things are gonna fit, returns are annoying, and sometimes you don't even know where to start.

This season let Stitch Fix do all the hard work for us. They can be part of our village. It's so fun to get started. Okay, first you just take a few minutes to set up your Stitch Fix style profile, you answer a few questions about what you like to wear, what you don't, and how open you are to try new styles. I hope you're very open. And then Stitch Fix's expert stylist will go to work finding items exclusively for you.

Every single piece is handpicked for you and is unique to your size, your style, and in your budget, making it the best way to discover clothes that make you look and feel your best. Stitch Fix will send you five pieces to try on at home, keep what you love and send back what you don't. Shipping returns and exchanges are easy and free. Plus there is no subscription required. You can try it once or set up automatic deliveries. There are no hidden fees ever.

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And now back to finish up our conversation that is making me hungry with our friend Pat Martin.

[00:32:05] <music>

**Annie:** Where do you hope Martin's goes in the next ten years?

**Pat:** I don't know. I don't know.

**Annie:** You're like, "Annie, please, I'm just getting out of the building."

**Pat:** I don't know. I'm not growing for the sake of growing.

**Annie:** Do you ever dream of going from one restaurant to...?

**Pat:** No, I never got into this to go open up a second one. I partnered with a guy four years after I opened to show me how to run a restaurant, and that skill he provided me is what enabled me to open up two, three, four, and on. And I love being a restaurateur. It's really not for everybody and it could have very much not been for me. Just because you know how to cook and you love to cook does not in any shape way or form mean you need to be in the restaurant business. That's a whole nother conversation.

**Annie:** The business, yeah.

**Pat:** But I have great people that make this happen. There's some of them that will end up... I'll either have to create an opportunity for them or they leave. That's really how I'm growing is like, you know, at some point, you know, "Hey, Annie, like you've been with me now for six or seven years. You've done an incredible job. Why don't you go over to Gallatin and you'd be 20% owner/partner with me." And that's it.

**Annie:** Wow. That's how you do it?

**Pat:** Yeah. There's no-

**Annie:** You just look inside and who's already doing the work.

**Pat:** Oh yeah. You can't franchise barbecue successful... Like you can franchise it but you can't franchise and be proud of what you're cooking because franchising is an inherently different mindset to your approach and how you put your pants on. But when I find people who care about my brand to somewhat the level that I do when they're not getting paid to care that level, I take notice of that.

Because Martha and I have three kids, White, Daisy, and Walker, but really we have five. We have White, Daisy, Walker, Martin's BBQ, and Hugh Babies. So when somebody acts like they really care about my kids when they're not being asked or paid to really at a high level... you can't teach that.

**Annie:** That's what I was gonna say. You sound like you're talking like a father. Like you father even the people that work for you to go like, "I see you and I trust you now with more."

**Pat:** Yeah.

**Annie:** That's amazing. One of our friends wrote in on the AFD Week in Review email and asked how you dress your slugburger.

**Pat:** There's only one way to dress it.

**Annie:** Oh, tell us.

**Pat:** Chopped white onions, three pickles and yellow mustard. No cheese-

**Annie:** No cheese?

**Pat:** No.

**Annie:** Okay.

**Pat:** You just eat it the way it's supposed to come.

**Annie:** Okay. So when we go order, you just say-

**Pat:** You have to eat them hot. And most people, you know, slug yeast... a nickel used to be referred to as a slug.

**Annie:** Okay

**Pat:**



**Pat:** So its price is what gave it its moniker.

**Annie:** Got it.

**Pat:** It's not made with freakin slugs.

**Annie:** Right. Right. Right.

**Pat:** So it probably would have spread a lot farther had the name not been what it is. But I will say this: that I don't know a lot of sandwiches or even food items that it's got a 10 minute lifespan and it goes from being like, I have to have a third one, not a second one a third one, to.. that's okay. I don't know what the big deal is about because they have to be hot right out of the fryer, right on the burn, mustard, pickle onion kind of smashed down, in paper and you just crush it.

**Annie:** Oh, I can't wait.

**Pat:** So sluggers are incredible. But if you ever go in and you see one in their park cooking them, don't even get it.

**Annie:** Don't.

**Pat:** And if you get one, try not to eat it in the car home or eat it in the car home. Don't wait till you get on-

**Annie:** Yes, eat in the parking lot.

**Pat:** Yeah, eat. Go and get it done.

**Annie:** Just do it. That's right. Get it done. Can I ask you a couple of Father's Day questions?

**Pat:** Sure.

**Annie:** Our whole month has accidentally ended up being all fathers on the podcast, which is hilarious. So we're asking all the dads a couple of questions. So how old are your 3?

**Pat:** 16, 15, and 12?

**Annie:** Oh, wow. Okay. And y'all live here in Nashville?

**Pat:** Yes, Westside.

**Annie:** Okay. What's your favorite thing about being a dad?

**Pat:** Oh, gosh, don't worry about asking an easy question or anything?

**Annie:** I know. I'm sorry.

**Pat:** So relative. I do love being that stability for them, whether it's physical safety or financial safety, or emotional safety, or whatever. I mean, it really is. We all know once you become a parent, there is no YouTube course or being a parent. And it's super sad how fast it goes.

**Annie:** Have you been surprised?

**Pat:** Yeah. It makes me sad thinking about it right now. But, you know, you realize that you just really are limited on your control of them. You got to let them be them. In our family, you know, getting them to church and having some spiritual foundation with God and then being there for them, talking to him.

Martha and I have gone the exact opposite way that our parents went with us, which is natural. I don't even know if my dad ever talked to me about sex ever. It was kind of talk but we didn't talk about it. And we've gone the exact opposite. Just like if they're going to drink or get drunk, or if they're going to even do some drugs or fool around or whatever, like, "We're here if you want to talk to us about it." It's a guidance zone, not a judgment zone.

**Annie:** Wow. Guidance zone, not a judgment zone.

**Pat:** So you just got to let them make their mistakes. That whole thing about being a parent is the funnest thing about being a father.

**Annie:** Really?

**Pat:** Yeah.

**Annie:** What's your advice? Because we just did a survey a few months ago, so we know that about half our friends listening are parents. So what is your advice to a new dad? What's your advice to the dad who's got a two-year-old and it hadn't blinked yet and the kid is 16.

**Pat:** Don't let any time go. There's time we all have to have our own social fixes and all that stuff. But a lot of times, like if I want to go to a Titans game or something and they don't want to go, I'm now realizing it's not too late. But I'm now realizing I

wish I realized then back when they were in their four, five, six, seven, eight, nine-year-old years that I was like, "You know what? I'll just not go to the Titans game. What do you want to do?" That's it. Because you'll look back and you're like, "Where'd all time go? Like, how come I didn't get this... I'm not spending more time."

Before we got on air, you were asking me about this book, and I was like, It's kind of like a kid, I'm ready for it to go off to college because I'm really proud of this book. But I'm ready for it to get out of my way too. And really, it's more of that in my way on the personal side, not just because these things take up a tremendous amount of bandwidth. And I'm ready to just get home and just... Listen, I'm home every night and all that, but it's just the quality time not the quantity time.

**Annie:** Yeah. Somebody's gonna go to Barnes for the first time next time they come to Nashville-

**Pat:** Whole hog sandwiches, slaw on top.

**Annie:** Okay. I don't think I've ever had that. They have all of them? All the Martins have a whole hog sandwich?

**Pat:** Yeah, all. Downtown we cook them every day. Post-COVID we're only on weekends with whole hog. But any pork sandwich has slaw on top. You can't eat a pork sandwich without a slaw on top. It's just not... you can't do that.

**Annie:** You just can't do that.

**Pat:** That's why God is not afraid to do that.

**Annie:** I was like, "The Lord said, slaw on top." I'll do it. I'll post a picture of it when I do it. I'll do it this weekend. When people ask us where to go, we're always like, Ladybird Taco, Martin's Bar-B-Que.

**Pat:** Thank you.

**Annie:** Okay, the last question we always ask. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

**Pat:** I would say right now I'm looking forward to Memorial Day. We're gonna go home to our family farm in Mississippi. That's kind of what's on my immediate horizon. I'm trying to get to-

**Annie:** I mean, summer with barbecue and summer with making ice cream like you show us in the book, I mean, I feel like barbecue and summer just are tied tightly together. I wonder if it's everywhere, but it's for sure in the South that it just makes you feel something when it's summer and barbecue.

**Pat:** Matter of fact you just put a thought. We're gonna make ice cream more. You just made me decide that.

**Annie:** Oh, good. Is this your ice cream machine in the book or do you have one like it?

**Pat:** We've got several of those.

**Annie:** I mean, those, yeah.

**Pat:** Yeah, it's very, very important that that is done... You know, electric ice cream makers don't have the power to get it hard enough. So their clutch gives out. And most people use the old stupid ice cream recipes of like ice cream salt, which basically rock salt. And then they go get a bag of cube dice. Well, there's too much air. It's like Lego is being stacked on top of each other. You have to recreate an ice cylinder. So that's why I tell you in there. You gotta make your own ice and a Tropicana container and just gotta be crushed ice.

**Annie:** I see it, yeah.

**Pat:** Like powder ice almost. And then you pour Morton's ice salt and reform this ice cylinder. That's how you get it really hard. That's how you make really great ice cream.

**Annie:** Man, I can't wait. Before you leave, I'm going to get you to sign this book to my dad. That's what I want to give him. But I can't wait for our friends to get this and get a copy and share it with men and women. But it's a good book.

**Pat:** Oh, thank you.

**Annie:** It's really good. Thanks for doing this today.

**Pat:** Thanks for having me. It was an honor.

**Annie:** Yeah.

[00:41:47] <music>

**Outro:** Oh, you guys, don't you love him? I mean, I could listen all day to this guy. I am so fascinated by my friend and I am so fascinated and in love with barbecue. This was a dream. You guys go get your copy of *Life of Fire* or grab one for every griller in your life, male and female. Be sure you're following Pat on social media so you could tell him thanks for being on the show.

And would you take a minute to rate and review or share the show if you enjoyed it? That means so much and helps us make new friends who we haven't met yet.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find at Martin's Bar-B-Que but also Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that is how you can find me. And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you. I'll do the same.

Y'all know what I'm about to say. Today what sounds fun to me, eating at Martin's. Da, eating at Martins. So I'm going to call the Barnes family and see if they would like to join me and Martin's. It's very close to where we all are. And we are going to sit outside and I'm going to drink a sprite because what we did and probably mentioned is their sprite is the finest in the land. It is delicious. I just want to keep talking to you about how much I love Martin's. Grab the book When you come to Nashville, eat there. Amen.

Have a great weekend. Happy Father's Day to all of you dads, granddads, and all the father figures in our lives. We are so lucky for the good men in our lives who are investing in us and the children in our lives. I'm very, very grateful. We'll see you back here on Monday with one of our favorite counselors, David Thomas. Listen, if Father's Day is a hard day for you, meet us back here on Monday. We're going to talk about it, okay? We love you guys. We'll see you on Monday. Have a great weekend.