

Sawbones 445: Ketchup

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Clint: *Sawbones* is a show about medical history, and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour and not try to diagnose your mystery boil? We think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy a moment of distraction from that weird growth. You're worth it.

[theme music plays]

Justin: Hello everybody, and welcome to *Sawbones*: a marital tour of misguided medicine. I'm your cohost, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: What—you look chagrined. Were you about to show me something on your phone?

Sydnee: I was about to show you something.

Justin: What do you got?

Sydnee: Bernadette Peters is coming to the Paramount Arts Center in Ashland, Kentucky.

Justin: Yes!

Sydnee: I know, you love Bernadette Peters so I was showing—I wanted to show you that.

Justin: Gotta get—gotta get backstage! See Bernadette, hang out, get a hang goin'.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: I don't know. See where it goes.

Sydnee: What would you ask Bernadette Peters about.

Justin: Oh my gosh. What was it like filming *The Jerk*?

Sydnee: That's exactly what I would ask! I would wanna know about *The Jerk*. [laughs]

Justin: Did you like playing the witch? What's up with *Heartbeeps*? That was a wild flick. You and Andy Kaufman as robots? I mean, c'mon! Yeah, Bernadette could talk for a long time. But that's not what this episode is about. I'm suspecting you would not bless me with an episode that just about Bernadette Peters.

Sydnee: No, I wouldn't do that. Your reaction would make me too jealous.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: Um, no. We had a recommendation for an episode from Britt—thank you, Britt—about something I was not familiar with. This was a history that I didn't know. There are lots of things that aren't medicine.

Justin: That's... 100%. Gotta agree. Just to name a few: taxes. The sun. Uh, uh... pound cake.

Sydnee: Yes. Those are examples.

Justin: Except maybe the sun. I mean, you could actually make an argument for the sun.

Sydnee: Well, I was gonna—I wa—yeah. Medicine is a broad term, but.

Justin: Gotta get the D.

Sydnee: Yeah. I mean...

Justin: That's the only prescription if you gotta get your D.

Sydnee: [laughs] There—okay, there's something there. There's something to that. No. What I was going to say is there are a lot of things that aren't medicine that we used as medicine. And we've given examples of that, like every day, like, alcohol-based products, and all kinds of, like, herbs and flavorings and spices. Like, there are lots of things, right? That we were like, "That tastes strong. I bet its medicine."

Justin: We got a whole podcast about it, if you're interested. Uh, this one. *Sawbones*. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah. But one that I didn't know is that there was a very brief period in American history where we thought ketchup was medicine.

Justin: Mmm.

Sydnee: But I don't—I didn't know that, but I feel like it makes sense for us?

Justin: Yeah. I mean, if you put—

Sydnee: That we thought ketchup was medicine. Like, that feels right. Like yeah, of course, of course we here in America thought [holding back laughter] ketchup was medicine, briefly.

Justin: I can think of few times where I have ingested some delicious fries dipped in ketchup and I haven't felt a little bit better afterwards.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Justin: You know?

Sydnee: Ketchup is great.

Justin: Ketchup's great.

Sydnee: I love ketchup.

Justin: I don't like too much ketchup. It can go a little wi—now, I didn't used to be that way. I used to be no condiments guy. And I don't know how—

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] No condiments guy.

Justin: I used to be no condiments guy and now I'm few condiments guy.

Sydnee: You would say that on dates and they'd be like, "No—what did you say? Con-di-ments!"

Justin: I said I'm no condiments guy!

Sydnee: Con-di-ments. [laughs]

Justin: Yeah. Um... [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: That was a very Justin joke, Sydnee. [snorts] Um... but, uh—

Sydnee: [through laughter] I've been with you too long.

Justin: I'm in—I know. I'm into ketchup now.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Just like Randy Moss is Inta Juice, I'm into ketchup.

Sydnee: Ketchup did not start off as a tomato-based product. Did you know that? [pause] Ketchup is a tomato-based product now. Did you know that?

Justin: I did know that.

Sydnee: Yeah. Ketchup is the only form in which my father will eat a tomato.

Justin: I figured—

Sydnee: He said once that he doesn't like when food looks too much like it started off. [through laughter] He likes it when it looks really processed.

Justin: He doesn't—yeah. He can't—he doesn't even like like a fruit pie. If you have chunks of fruit in there, he's not gonna mess with it.

Sydnee: He really doesn't eat much fruit at all.

Justin: [simultaneously] No interest. No interest.

Sydnee: He will not mess with fruit. So—okay. Ketchup didn't start off as a tomato-based condiment. It dates back, way back to ancient China. Like, 300 BCE. Uh, where it started as a paste that was made from things like fermented fish entrails.

Justin: [holding back laughter] Yum.

Sydnee: Um... [holding back laughter] meat byproduct.

Justin: Gotta use every bit of it. What can we do with this?

Sydnee: Soybean.

Justin: Let's make this into a paste.

Sydnee: Yeah. So, like—and this—and this paste—you can imagine, it would be, like, a salty, fishy, ferment-y kind of flavor. Or not necessarily fishy, but you know, salty, ferment-y is kind of the vibe. [laughs] And this would've been used in various dishes, like, as a flavoring agent. But it also was chosen because, like, this is something that you could carry with you and would be preserved pretty easily. If you think about...

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: ... what it's made of. Like, something fermented like that... you'd just let it keep fermenting I guess, right? It just ferments forever. You just eat it forever.

Justin: Probably not forever.

Sydnee: [laughs] At some point it might gross you out.

Justin: At some point, yeah.

Sydnee: Um, so the advantage of that, like I said, is it can be carried over long distances, like for instance sea journeys. You know, across the sea. And so it—

Justin: A lot of stuff came about that way. Ales.

Sydnee: Yeah, exactly. Like, that's why IPAs are IPAs. India pale ales. They put the hops in there to preserve 'em.

Justin: And just got used to drinking it.

Sydnee: Made 'em bitter. And now I like 'em.

Justin: The end! [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: No, that's not what this is about. [laughs] So they were carried along various trade routes. They went to different places in the world. And as ketchup—well, as it was initially known, as either *koe-chiap* or *ke-tsiap*, um, then that would've been in various southern Chinese dialects. But you can see where this word is coming from. It became known as either catsup or ketchup. Which is, you know, the one I prefer. Does anybody still say catsup?

Justin: I've never heard anybody say it, but it is funny.

Sydnee: Yeah. I've never heard anyone say it in real life. I've seen it written.

Justin: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, on bottles and stuff. But is it pronounced that way? I thought that was just an alternative spelling for the same word.

Sydnee: No, it's catsup.

Justin: Catsup.

Sydnee: I don't know. I assume.

Justin: Okay. Well, sure.

Sydnee: I mean, it must be, right? Why would you—if it was pronounced ketchup, why wouldn't you spell it ketchup? Why would you spell it catsup?

Justin: Now, honey, we've been helping Charlie learn to read. You know that that is a tenuous rule at best, that the English language looks like what the world—like, how rarely is that true, that the word looks like what it's trying to spell?

Sydnee: I hate explaining that. She'll sound something out and I'll be like, "Now, I know that's what it looks like, but that's not how it sounds. It sounds like this." And she says, "Why?" And the answer's always, "English is... stupid." I don't know.

Justin: Chaos. Sometimes we just throw a letter in there.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] I don't know. English sucks.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know why we did it that way. I'm sorry.

Justin: I live in fear of the day when she has to learn how to spell convenience. And I just have to stare at her like, [whispering] I don't know, honey. I don't know. But I made it this far.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: [whispering] You cannot learn this one.

Sydnee: I'm still embarrassed about the fact that I am a physician and every time I have to write the word hemorrhoid...

Justin: Oh, that's a tough one!

Sydnee: Uh-huh. I have to stop and think. How many Ms? Hold on. Are there more Rs? Hold on.

Justin: I've had to type hemorrhoid more than my fair share of times, I think, and I've always had to look it up.

Sydnee: [laughs] Okay. So it was either known as catsup or ketchup as it moved around different places. Sometimes it would be called, like, just a spiced sauce. If you saw a recipe for a spiced sauce it was probably a variety of ketchup that you were talking about, or sometimes a high East India sauce.

Justin: High East India sauce.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: That's a good name. I like that.

Sydnee: Um, the first recipe for ketchup appeared in a cookbook in 1758 by Eliza Smith called *The Complete Housewife*. Um, and this was a, uh, kind of savory chutney. It had anchovies, cloves, ginger, and pepper. And, um, basically it would've been put with, like, meat... or fish. Something like that. Right? And this is all ketchup. As you may have noticed, tomato has not entered the picture.

Justin: Not in the picture yet.

Sydnee: Right? Um, there is another recipe that I appreciated from 1736, which again, this is a recipe for ketchup. You boil two quarts of strong stale beer and a half pound of anchovies. [laughs quietly]

Justin: This is also from—

Sydnee: And then ferment it.

Justin: This is from a time period, though—and there's a lot of condiments like this—where the idea was to cover up the flavor of meat that had gone rogue, because we didn't have modern refrigeration techniques. So it makes sense that a sauce in this time period would've been pungent over everything else, because they're trying to give you a big, bold flavor [through laughter] to ignore the gross—

Sydnee: The rotten meat that you're eating.

Justin: —the gross, rotten meat you're enjoying.

Sydnee: Um, it's interesting, though, 'cause you'd think you'd want them to enjoy the big, bold flavor.

Justin: Of the meat? Of the rotten meat?

Sydnee: No, the big, bold flavor of the, um, ancho—half pound of anchovies that you boiled in... stale beer.

Justin: They didn't have anything good yet.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: You know what I mean?

Sydnee: I think they had good things.

Justin: They didn't have anything good yet.

Sydnee: This may just not have been one of them. Um, and there were all kinds of recipes for ketchup.

Justin: I've had English—I've had English food in the last ten years, you know what I mean? Imagine it 200 years ago.

Sydnee: Ohh. Ohh, our—our English listeners are gonna be really mad at you.

Justin: No, they get it.

Sydnee: You're gonna get—you're gonna get an email from David.

Justin: [simultaneously] Now, listen. Folks—

Sydnee: David's gonna tell you, "Listen."

Justin: I've eaten at the Rose and Crown pub at Disney World.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Twice. I think I have a pretty good handle on British food, okay?

Sydnee: Oh no. Please, if you send angry emails—

Justin: [loudly] Why mushy peas? [wheezes]

Sydnee: Will you address them to Justin?

Justin: Why mushy peas?

Sydnee: I'm the one who op—I'm the one who checks the email, so just, like, put in the subject, like, "This is—I am angry at Justin. This is for Justin."

Justin: For his correct—[through laughter] his correct taste.

Sydnee: Please know it's not me. So anyway, there were all kinds of—in the 18th century, there were all kinds of recipes for ketchup. There were some made with oysters. There were some made with mussels. Mushroom ketchup was very popular. That was Jane Austen's favorite type of ketchup was a mushroom-based ketchup concoction. There was walnut ketchup and lemon ketchup and celery and—fruits sometimes were used, plums or peaches. Um, you would boil them into some sort of—I mean, you can imagine. Like, a

consistency kind of thing. Fermentation may have been a part of the recipe a lot of the time, adding a ton of salt to it. Something that would be preserved easily, right? Something that you could carry around. Maybe not in your pocket, per se...

Justin: Is that ketchup in your pocket?

Sydnee: That's weird. [laughs quietly]

Justin: Do you think—do you ever think when you're reading stuff like this where—of the moment when someone with a... book and a pen was like, "Hey, Jane? What's your favorite ketchup?"

And she's like, "Why are you asking?"

It's like, "Well... I'm doing history, and for history we want to know what your favorite kind of ketchup is."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: "History wants to know about it, so just in case in a couple hundred years if somebody's making a podcast—or, you know, almost 300 years somebody's making a podcast and it's like, 'What's her favorite kind of ketchup?' I just—history needs to know, so please."

Sydnee: Right. And if the only thing that is mentioned about you on this podcast is what your favorite ketchup recipe was, are you cool with that? Is that would you would like to be known for, Jane Austen?

Justin: Yeah. You're gonna be so famous that we could just say your name and your favorite kind of ketchup, and that's interesting.

Sydnee: That's kind of cool, though.

Justin: Yeah. I mean, it's—

Sydnee: I would like to be famous enough that if you just offhandedly mentioned "And you know what Sydnee McElroy's favorite ketchup was?"

Somebody would be like, "Oh, what was it?" Like, "I know who that is and I am interested in what her favorite ketchup may be."

Justin: Yeah. And that's—yeah, that's true. But also, like, why did history have to grab that one? You know what I mean? Like, there's lots of stuff we could've pulled. Just weird that that made the cut of history.

Sydnee: If history remember me for a food fetish, it will just be soup.

Justin: Yeah. Yeah. But like, what if it did? [wheezes] You know what I mean?

Sydnee: [crosstalk] [laughs] [through laughter] There was an entire week where Sydnee ate soup twice a day every day.

Justin: You've been bragging about double soup day all week.

Sydnee: [singing] I've had a double soup day. [laughs]

Justin: Yeah. [crosstalk].

Sydnee: That's a song—I made up a song about having a double soup day?

Justin: It's different—the song's different every night, but it's always about the joys of having a double soup day.

Sydnee: [through laughter] I love having soup.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: I'm not having soup for breakfast.

Justin: You had a double pho day.

Sydnee: I did. I had pho for lunch and dinner yesterday.

Justin: Not leftovers.

Sydnee: No.

Justin: Two discrete pho... s.

Sydnee: Phos.

Justin: Bowls of pho.

Sydnee: Two phos. Anyway, there was a recipe that called for 100 oysters, three pints of white wine, and then you would take a lemon peel, and you know how you can poke mace and cloves in there, like you do?

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Anyway, why were people not using tomatoes, you may wonder?

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Why—why haven't—at this point nobody's even stumbled on throwing a tomato into ketchup yet.

Justin: They may not be big there yet.

Sydnee: [through laughter] They may not be big there.

Justin: Maybe tomatoes weren't big there yet.

Sydnee: They may not be big in the world?

Justin: What?

Sydnee: There were recipes for ketchup everywhere. You think that in the entire world, tomatoes weren't big?

Justin: No, that's fair. Somewhere tomatoes were big, I'm sure.

Sydnee: Somewhere someone liked a tomato.

Justin: Someone liked tomatoes. I'm just saying sometimes stuff like that comes into the Western culture later than you think it does, right?

Sydnee: Well, and part of it—I will say specifically in Western culture there was a fear around tomatoes. This is why tomatoes weren't being used. People thought they were poisonous. You know why? The theory goes that people thought tomatoes were poisonous.

Justin: Why?

Sydnee: Because a lot of people ate off of pewter plates. Tomatoes are very acidic. And if you put very acidic food on pewter plates, you can leech some of the lead out of the plate, out of the pewter.

Justin: Ohh.

Sydnee: And then you're eating lead.

Justin: Bad.

Sydnee: And then you get lead poisoning. So the tomatoes weren't poisonous, but the combo could have been making people ill. So perhaps that was why for quite a while especially Europeans avoided tomatoes, because they thought that they were poisonous. So that's why it takes a while before tomatoes are thrown into ketchup, is because people thought they would make you sick.

The first published tomato ketchup recipe was from James Mease, who was a scientist from Philadelphia. He wrote about that he had found a catsup recipe that he particularly enjoyed. Um, and he recommended as a new ingredient for your catsup...

Justin: Let me guess. Tomatoes.

Sydnee: Love apples.

Justin: Oh—eww.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Gross! [through laughter] What's that?

Sydnee: Those are—those are tomatoes.

Justin: [wheeze-laughs] Is that a slang term you just came up with for 'em?

Sydnee: No, that is what—[wheezes] that is what they were called sometimes. Not just my James Mease but by other people of the time period.

Justin: That's great!

Sydnee: Would refer to tomatoes as love apples.

Justin: That sublime.

Sydnee: Why?

Justin: Wonderful. That's just wonderful. What a wonderful wrinkle to put in my brain. Thank you.

Sydnee: As people started eating tomatoes, I guess off of dishes other than pewter—[through laughter] which, I mean, it's hard to imagine having dishes that weren't pewter, right?

Justin: Yeah, right. Sheesh.

Sydnee: "What are you eating off of?"

Justin: "And what are you eating?"

Sydnee: "Plastic?"

Justin: "What are you eating?"

"Uh, there's not a name for it yet. I'm thinking about lust grapes."

Sydnee: [laughs] No, but people—

Justin: What about thin-skin orange? No. [wheezes] Love apples.

Sydnee: You think—hold—hold—hold on. Hold on. You think a tomato is like a thin-skinned orange?

Justin: No, that's the hilarious... thi—it's also not like an apple at all, Sydnee! In what way is it like an apple?

Sydnee: I mean, they're both red.

Justin: So is a fire truck! But you don't call a tomato a very soft, small fire truck!

Sydnee: No! But like, I think that a tomato and an apple have at least a thing in common. What do a tomato and an orange have in common?

Justin: [simultaneously] Fruit. Fruit.

Sydnee: Okay, but like—no, I mean, like, visually.

Justin: What are you talking—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: You think you have a point right now, and everyone who's ever listened to this show right now is screaming like, "Sydnee, you don't have a point! Justin's right!"

Sydnee: I just don't know why your first thought would be that a tomato is a thin-skinned orange.

Justin: [through laughter] I'm just saying that they didn't have a name for it, so—!

Sydnee: An orange is orange! It's named that!

Justin: Okay, so Sydnee, let's focus in on the love part, if you're so smart. Why is it called a love apple?

Sydnee: Because people thought tomatoes were aphrodisiacs!

Justin: Okay... I guess you—

Sydnee: There it is!

Justin: Ah, yeah, you got me.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: [derisively] Love apple...

Sydnee: But why did they think it was medicine?

Justin: I don't know!

Sydnee: Well, you're about to find out. But I'm gonna take you to the billing department first.

Justin: Let's go.

[ad break]

Justin: I don't like tomatoes by themselves. I meant to mention that earlier. I don't like raw tomatoes.

Sydnee: I know that about you.

Justin: But I like 'em in sauce. So I shouldn't have given your dad a hard time 'cause, like, I down eat raw tomatoes. I don't like cooked tomatoes either, but I especially don't like raw tomatoes—

Sydnee: I like 'em with stuff. I don't like to just eat a slice of tomato on its own. But, like, if you put salt and pepper on it and then you put it with

something else, like, I'll it just some chopped up tomato and avocado. Or if you put with an egg I'll eat it, or on a piece of bread.

Justin: So you like them. [crosstalk]

Sydnee: But no, I don't wanna just eat, like, just a slice of tomato on its own. I mean, I ca—I mean, I'm not—I'll eat anything. I'm not picky. But anyway, this is not interesting. Um... [laughs] it would be around the 1830s that tomato-based ketchup—so ketchup was not thought of as medicine until the tomato became part of the picture. That's when you started to see applications in the medical world.

The first person I think that we can trace all this back to was someone named John Cook Bennett, which I believe he was an actual doctor. I'm not 100% sure if he was actual doctor. I've read a lot about John Cook Bennett because at first I wasn't sure—I found, like, two different stories. There's this John Cook Bennett, Dr. John Cook Bennett as they keep calling him, who is responsible for ketchup being thought of as medicine for a short moment in history.

And then there's this John Cook Bennett who I read about all this wild stuff that he did. Some, like, sex scandals and some attempted murders and things. [laughs] That have to do—[laughs]—with the Mormon church. And I didn't know if it was the same John Cook Bennett, but I finally found this—

Justin: Tell me you got an answer on this.

Sydnee: Yes, it is the same dude, um, that I was able to finally connect these two stories. And it's weird, because—and I think there's some books written that if I had found the entire book and read through the entire book I would've been able to find this. But searching articles online there's, like, two very distinct John Cook Bennett's and it's hard to cross-reference. Um, but it's the same guy. So he—initially Bennett tried to, like, launch colleges and medical schools. He, like, handed out fake medical degrees and stuff like that. So one of our classic *Sawbones* characters, right? Like...

Justin: Yeah, flimflam man.

Sydnee: Yeah, exactly. The kind of stuff that people do. He was, like, president of a medical department at a university for a while. And he did a lecture at the time on the health benefits of tomatoes. Now, he was not coming up with this idea on his own.

There were other doctors—and, I mean, at this point in history, you know, we were... theorizing about a lot of different things, what the health benefits could be. And you know what? We still do that, right? Every year there's a new food that's a superfood that you should always eat. Why not the tomato in the 1830s, right?

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: So there were already doctors who were saying, like, "I think tomatoes might be good for you." And so of course tomato-based ketchup would be a vehicle for those healthy tomatoes, and specifically for things like diarrhea or indigestion, or even jaundice. Doctors were recommending, like, eat some tomatoes, or have some ketchup, you know? It's a—it's haltingly yummy tomato juice.

Justin: Ugh...

Sydnee: [laughs] He went around talking about tomatoes, and trying to sell people on ketchup as medicine. That was like his next snake oil kind of thing, right? Like, "Yeah, just buy my ketchup, and then whatever." Um, and he found a guy—

Justin: [wheezy laughter] Not the most effective pitch, but sure. "Buy my ketchup, then whatever."

Sydnee: Uh, he found a guy named Archibald Miles who was selling something called American Hygiene Pills. [laughs quietly]

Justin: Nice.

Sydnee: Yeah. That's loaded, by the way.

Justin: Yeah, that's—

Sydnee: American Hygiene Pills?!

Justin: That could be anything.

Sydnee: That is terrifying. Hey, listen, kids? If anyone ever tries to sell you American Hygiene Pills...

Justin: [simultaneously] American Hygiene Pills, yeah.

Sydnee: ... run and tell an adult. Okay? Immediately. Run and tell an adult. And I am saying this no matter how old you are listening to this podcast.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, so he told Miles, like, "Hey, listen. I think—one of the things in your pills is tomato extract. I think you should start selling these as tomato pills. Because tomatoes are so hot right now. Everybody's into tomatoes. Everybody knows that tomatoes are so good for you, [holding back laughter] because I'm telling everybody tomatoes are good for you."

This is a great thing, right? Like, "Listen. I go around, tell everybody tomatoes are good for you, and then you sell tomato pills."

Justin: [crosstalk] "I have tomato pills! Good news!"

Sydnee: "And so why don't you sell tomato pills?" So he started selling them. As Dr. Miles' compound extract of tomato. He was really successful. He sold lots of tomato pills. Um, he would—he'd go buy tomatoes from people so that he could make his pills, and he would sell out all of his pills.

Justin: Please don't say pills anymore. I can't handle you saying the word pills anymore.

Sydnee: Why?

Justin: Pills. Pills, pill—it's just starting to echo in my head. It's starting to—

Sydnee: Are you hearing "pills" instead of "bills?"

[pause]

Justin: No—what?

Sydnee: The song "Bills, Bills, Bills"?

Justin: Pills, pills, pills. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] The problem is that Bennett was telling lots of people to sell tomato pills. [laughs quietly]

Justin: Oh, really?

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: This wasn't an exclusive offer?

Sydnee: No. So there were lots of people that were selling tomato pills in the 1830s. And, like, Bennett would support different ones. There were, like, tomato pill wars where, like, there was a guy named Holcombe who was selling tomato pills and Bennett was like, "Yeah! He's the real guy who sells—"

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: "—tomato pills! Don't listen to that other guy!" Which was the guy that he, like, told he should sell tomato pills. [laughs] There was another guy named Guy...

Justin: [wheezes]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] Dr. Guy... Phelps, up in Connecticut, who was like "I've got my own tomato pills." And I'm sorry, I don't know what else to call them other than pills. Tomato... tablets?

Justin: Pills. Pills.

Sydnee: I know it's bothering you, though. Tomato... capsules? I don't know.

Justin: No, it was just the concurrent uses of pills. It wasn't bothering me.

Sydnee: Oh, okay.

Justin: I was just pointing out that...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: That you had said pills a lot.

Sydnee: So he was selling different ones. Like, they were made slightly differently from, like, the leaves and the stalks of the plant as opposed to...

Justin: Where the nutrients are.

Sydnee: ... the tomato itself. No—what?

Justin: That's where all the nutrients—[laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I don't think that's true at all! No!

Justin: You're probably right.

Sydnee: I'm not a horticulturist, but... [laughs]

Justin: I was just making it up. I'm sorry.

Sydnee: So everybody was arguing over who got the first tomato extract... patent. Or probably didn't have a patent. They were just like, "I sold 'em first. I had the tomato pills first." And this John Cook Bennett guy was going around sort of, like, egging on the tomato wars.

Justin: Nice.

Sydnee: But the thing is, like, this was an incredibly short-lived medical fad. And we've covered things like this before. Something that it catches the imagination of the public, everybody goes wild for 'em, everybody's gotta go get this new—you know, it's a new snake oil. It's the new cure-all. It's the thing that will make you feel amazing. Everybody buys these tomato-based medicines. They probably did nothing.

Justin: [quietly] Well, you have to assume.

Sydnee: And then people are like... "I don't really think, uh... I don't really think I wanna get these anymore."

Justin: "You didn't put any laudanum in 'em at all. I don't need these."

Sydnee: And, uh—and then the, uh—and then the guys who sold 'em went on to other things. Like, Miles went on to do, um... some, like, real estate. And Phelps went into insurance. And here's the wild thing, just on a side note. So, John Cook Bennett... so, its wild because, like, as I was looking up the John Cook Bennett that was, like... [pause] At one point I saw him called, like, the Lucifer of the Mormon church.

Justin: Okay?

Sydnee: In an article. So, like... obviously there's some other unsavory stuff in this guy's history. But all these histories pick up, like, after the 1830s. [laughs]

Justin: [laughs] Okay.

Sydnee: So it's like this little ketchup chapter of his life gets lost.

Justin: Man, we always forget about his thing with ketchup.

Sydnee: [laughs] Because, um, then he went on to, like... he basically had a lot of adulterous relationships and, like, unauthorized polygamy. Because this was at the time where, you know, that was very much part of the Church of Latter Day Saints. But he was sort of, like, doing it in a way that—

'cause he was, like, buddies with Joseph Smith. Was like, "No, that's not—no, no, no, no, no."

And he, like, pulled the wool over everybody's eyes for a while, and finally got excommunicated. [laughs]

Justin: [wheezes] Oh no!

Sydnee: From the church, for doing stuff that, I mean, for having all these affairs. And, like, he lied for a while, they didn't know he was married. And he was... sleeping around with all these different women, and they didn't even know that he had a wife, and he did have a wife, and... and then there was this whole—where he said that they tried to, like, murder him later? Like, he accused people of putting out a hit on him. And he said that the people who showed up to murder him were all dressed in drag, and that was a big scandal, and did that really happen? Um, it's wild. [laughs] Uh... if you're interested, there's lots of articles about this part of John Cook Bennett's life.

Justin: Yeah. I imagine that probably gets a lot more ink than his brief dalliance as a ketchup [snorts] uh, salesman.

Sydnee: Well, but I didn't know—I mean, it's really wild because, like, I obviously had never heard any of these stories. And you can read—there's whole biographies about him, if that's the kind of thing you're interested in. If you just want to know. [laughs] I found this really cool—you know what put it together for me?

Justin: What?

Sydnee: Cincinnati.

Justin: Oh! Okay.

Sydnee: Cincinnati put it together for me. I found a, um... uh, *Cincinnati Curiosities* by Greg Hand who wrote—like, finally pulled together that this was the same Bennett who was responsible for—he was called—*The Saintly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett* is a book you can read if you want to know the whole thing.

But anyway—so he pulled it all together. And so after his time selling tomato pills and getting people to fight over who made the first tomato pill and sort of, like, stoking the flames of the tomato pill war, he went on to, um, [through laughter] get excommunicated from the Church of Latter Day Saints.

Justin: What a wild journey.

Sydnee: Yeah. Um, now, the—by—at this point it's, like, the 1850's. The last of the people who were selling tomato products as medicine, whether it be pushing ketchup as a medical entity, telling people to eat tomatoes for their medicinal benefits, or just tablets or pills or something made of tomato product, everybody had sort of, like, given that up. That whole fad had worn off. Nobody was really using it as medicine anymore. Um, and this is, like, perfect timing.

It's still being used as condiment. It's still obviously at this point extremely popular in all of the ways we know that we use ketchup. But the final flavor—like, that ketchup would still not have been the ketchup we know today. That was a lot more similar to, like, some sort of very tomato-y kind of sauce. You know? And, like, tomato-ketchup is not tomato sauce. They're two very distinct things. They're both tomato-based, but they're very distinct. Um, adding vinegar was a big change in—

Justin: Changed the game.

Sydnee: Yeah. And that's where we get the ketchups that we know today. And in 1876... there was a relatively new company... called Heinz.

Justin: Oh my. Okay.

Sydnee: And, uh, they mixed tomatoes, vinegar, brown sugar, salt, and I guess spices that we're not supposed to know?

Justin: Are they secret?

Sydnee: I don't know.

Justin: [simultaneously] I had never realized.

Sydnee: I don't know if the Heinz recipe is secret or not. I don't know. There's spices in there. I assume the bottle, if I were to pick it up right now, which I do not have a bottle of Heinz next to me, but I assume it would say, like, "Natural and artificial flavors." [laughs quietly] Because everything says that.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: But I don't know.

Justin: If you want, there is a *Food to Build America* about Heinz, so you can learn more about that.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Is there?

Justin: Of course. Maybe their podcast. I can't tell if there's an episode of the show or not, but...

Sydnee: Well, I'm sure there's a very interesting story about, like, finding this exact recipe. 'Cause a lot of people were making different ketchup products and catsup products, and there was still a lot of homemade recipes that people were using and making for all these various spiced sauces before Heinz sort of dominated.

Justin: That's one of my favorite scenes that's in almost every episode of *Food to Build America* is, like, someone will bring someone a tray of, like, 30 different kinds of something. Like, gum or whatever. And then they're like, "Chew each piece." And they're like, "Ugh. God."

And then finally they pick up that one thing and they take a bite. They're probably like, "I didn't want to even offer you this one. It's not ready yet."

Then he takes a bite and he's like, "This is the Butterfinger!"

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: "We found it! Make a million of these by the end of the week."

Sydnee: As—so just as, like, tomatoes as medicine are falling off as a fad—and I should say, part of what contributed to that is that there were lots of copycat pills. So these people who were actually trying to push, like, "This is a pill made with tomato extract," there were also people who were, like, selling you laxatives. [laughs quietly] And saying, like, "This is a tomato pill. I promise." And you're like, "Will this help my diarrhea?" And they're like, "Oh, sure, yeah, definitely!"

And then you take it and you're like "No, it's worse! It's actually worse!"

Justin: "What did you eat? It can't have been our pills!"

Sydnee: [through laughter] It's 'cause it was—it was a laxative. Um, but then Heinz came out and—do you know why it was 57? [pause] Heinz 57.

Justin: No.

Sydnee: It is not because it was the 57th formula.

Justin: That's formula 409.

Sydnee: Yeah. That's what I would've assumed.

Justin: [simultaneously] Which was also not the 57th formula.

Sydnee: It was not. It was not that. It was because 5 and 7 were Heinz and his wife's favorite numbers.

Justin: That's, uh... that's... very, um... eccentric. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: There's that—there's that bit of—

Justin: That's a very eccentric choice they made.

Sydnee: There's that bit of history. But anyway—so, um, that's the history of ketchup as medicine. Thank you, Cincinnati, for coming in clutch and putting it all together for me. I love Cincinnati.

Justin: You were ha—you were losing it trying to figure out if this is the same guy. 'Cause it didn't feel like anybody could be this interesting, but here you are.

Sydnee: Well—no! And I really—like, I wanted to explain that little tangent about John Cook Bennett, but not if it was two—what if it was two different guys?

Justin: [simultaneously] Two different people.

Sydnee: What if there was the one who sold fake tomato pills and then there was the one who did all this wild stuff and got excommunicated? And I didn't know if it was the same guy. But it was.

Justin: Thanks for listening to our podcast. Hey, if you like this show, we would hope that you would do the right, responsible thing and find one friend this week, just one person where you're like, "Hey. I know you like interesting stuff. I think you'd love this show. It's great. Here's how you listen to it."

And then you put a—it in their hands.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Whatever that means.

Sydnee: You put it in their hands.

Justin: Put it in their hands. And, uh, we would really appreciate that. We have a book. It's called *The Sawbones Book*. You can find it wherever you get books. Thanks to The Taxpayers for the use of their song, "Medicines," as the intro and outro of our program. And thanks to you for listening. We hope you have enjoyed yourself, and that's gonna do it for us. So until next time, my name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: And, as always, don't drill a hole in your head.

[theme music plays]

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