

Wichita Chamber Business Accelerator

Episode 137

Katherine Elderslie

Don Sherman: [00:00:00] welcome to another exciting edition of a WCBA Powered of course by Evergy. Thank you for listening. Don't forget to like us. Love us Sheriffs. Follow us. We truly appreciate you checking us out [00:01:00] in the house today. 1400 by Elderslie. E,

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: that's what's up. Hello. Hi. We are here with Katherine Elder.

How are you?

Katherine Elderslie: I'm good, thanks.



Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Yes, you are good. We are so happy to have you here today. Tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do.

Katherine Elderslie: Yes. My name is Katherine Elder and I'm the chef and owner along with my husband at Elderslie Farm and now 1400 by Elderslie in the Wichita Art Museum. Which is the newest piece of the growth of what get to do within the community.

1400 is in the art museum right upstairs we had our soft opening on March 9th, and we are just thrilled to be able to serve the community in a beautiful new space overlooking the river. It is actually the only riverfront restaurant in Wichita.

That is exciting.

What?

Yes, and we're so ready to enjoy all spring colors.

And watch as the seasons change.

Yes. And in fact, you just had the [00:02:00] real opening as well.

Yes. started with a little soft opening and got to invite some of the art museum's particular sponsors and community members board members. And then on March 9th, we opened to the

public. We are reservations recommended, but not required.

So it's really fun to get a really diverse individuals through the restaurant.

I love that.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: So, I wanna make certain since Don and I missed the actual opening that our names are always on the reservation list.

Katherine Elderslie: You

Don Sherman: of

not

Katherine Elderslie: day and you call in?

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: always have my name ready to go whenever I. Whenever I show

Katherine Elderslie: I show up, it's because I have a reservation.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Got it. Ok. Good. So how long, so you guys own the farm? Yes. And now you've opened up 1400. Yes.

So let's talk a little bit about 1400 and what inspired you to open up this new riverfront

Katherine Elderslie: Sure. An incredible opportunity, an invitation to go into the space and [00:03:00] renovate, update and take a little bit of what we do on the farm and bring it into town to a broader audience.

It's been a, in incredible process working with the museum and within the community being able to, well, I'll tell you just a little bit about the farm to start the way that the culinary. Picture and the hospitality side of Elderslie works is it began to showcase some of the vegetables that my sister-in-law was growing on the farm, as well as the blackberries that were growing there.

And kind of evolved from there. We now source from over 27 local growers and purveyors and many of whom are within 10 to 15 miles of the art museum actually.

and we love the opportunity to bring seasonality, locality to the table, as well as just a very intentional look at how service functions, how our teams function to make sure that we're [00:04:00] elevating culture, not just within the community, but within our own team.

That's really important.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Yeah, I love that that you're using the things that are from the farm over to the restaurant.

you know, that's a really big deal. And you know, that is what I know the farm for Blackberries, . And the goats.

Katherine Elderslie: Right. the goats.

the goats. Yep.

Don Sherman: What's the deal with the goats?

Katherine Elderslie: The deal with the goats is we have, and they just keep multiplying, which is its own special adventure.

We have a bunch of newborns. April, we'll have some more. Just a, the second round of kids born. But we have a very small dairy where we do very intentional production of farmstead cheeses. All of our goats, a lot of times, you know, you'll see the. packaging on nice cheese, and you see the barn and the goat, and they're all happy in sunshine.

But we aim to make sure that we're bridging the gap between how the animals are actually raised and treated in terms of how they are outside. We have a, [00:05:00] you know, our goats go, these girls are out. All the time grazing on grass. And they're very intentionally cared for. It's been an a really fascinating process.

My husband is responsible for the dairy and creamery. But we have now settled on our flagship cheeses. , the West Fork, which is an aged guda cheese that is, and this is all over the menu at 1400. It's in the mac and cheese, it's on the melted sandwich, all the different things.

Don Sherman: right.

Katherine Elderslie: And then the caprino fresco, which is a more kind of what you think of that zesty spreadable goat cheese.

And then my personal favorite is the cloudy, or excuse me, Cloverdale which is a brie style cheese. Young age. Just really Oh, it's fantastic.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: sounds amazing.

Don Sherman: So you have all goats, no cows.

Katherine Elderslie: All goats. No cows.

Don Sherman: So you have goat milk?

We do.

Okay. Yeah. Wow.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Yeah. They have it all. They have it all.

And so these things are on the menu. Okay. And so let's talk about your decision to, have you always been a chef?

Katherine Elderslie: [00:06:00] I have not. My formal training was in opera and chemistry.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Oh, can you single little something for us. she, and then mix up a little something.

Katherine Elderslie: the podcast

Don Sherman: Well, you could, but long as she doesn't have to jump in,

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: it'll be okay to sing.

No. No.

Katherine Elderslie: we're. All three gonna sing,

Don Sherman: Oh God.

Katherine Elderslie: right.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: that's where I have to say no.

Don Sherman: she has her limits.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Oh. No, that's really awesome. So let's talk about how did you decide that, you know, what I am going to become a chef?

Katherine Elderslie: The, I had been in school for opera and chemistry. Very seemingly disparate things, but now it's kind of all come full circle and it makes sense.

But after college, I am, and typically people, When they're 25, don't have an opportunity to just kind of pause their life and rethink all of their decisions. I got in a bad bike wreck actually and derailed where I was headed in[00:07:00] my career pursuing pharmacy actually at that point. And then I was teaching science at the time.

And then I married my husband who's awesome, and I followed him out to the farm and. Kind of

getting settled in out there. We very quickly decided with a Blackberry production to make a you pick just the way, because we have such a small Blackberry patch. Realizing like, this is a really awesome thing.

We'd like to invite our friends, invited their friends, and then the you pick side of Well not side now, it's just a you pick bramble. , took over and took off. And I was not particularly content to just check people in. So we started baking breakfast and my sister was growing vegetables and so, we did dinner series to showcase her vegetables.

I grew up in a very culinary interested household. We talked about food all the time. Everybody in my household cooked. There was rarely something you could just find [00:08:00] like after school. you couldn't just grab a snack. It was you made food. And it honestly spiraled from there. I just never stopped cooking.

And now here we are.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Here we are with a full restaurant on the river. I know.

Katherine Elderslie: it's beautiful.

Don Sherman: that's tight. You've been in business a few days, I believe, but. But you had your farm for a while or have your farm for a while. Yes. What's the culture at the farm?

And did that transcend to the restaurant?

Katherine Elderslie: Yes. The culture at the farm we're very dedicated to showcasing local ingredients. Very intentionally pursuing the health of the producer, whether it is a grower, the.

The bramble itself, the soil, and then translating that first into our team and making sure that what you experience as a guest in our restaurant or on our farm that you're experience an experiencing an outpouring of a very [00:09:00] intentional, curated opportunity to celebr. these ingredients, the stuff of Kansas and what they have to offer in a really lovely way that's delivered through immaculate service. But again, that service has to extend first from, you know, the chef to cook and us within our teams from us with a respect for the grower and the producer, and then out of that in a healthy setting.

that then translates into a really lovely experience for you as a guest, as we, we hope.

Don Sherman: Wow.

And you've mentioned it a couple of times. I'm sorry if I'm not at that level, but you said bramble twice. What's a bramble?

Katherine Elderslie: A bramble is the amalgamation of blackberries. So it's a, you know, a apple

orchard, blackberry, bramble.

Yeah.

Don Sherman: So do you believe that culture, now that you've opened your business for a couple of weeks, I believe?

Is that [00:10:00] transcending or you still need to make that part of the restaurant?

Katherine Elderslie: No, it's definitely it's come with us into the space. The opportunity to expand our team and to hire on more individuals and to particularly grow young people, I think is a, is really incredible.

But we have a strong enough heartbeat. I think that it's translated very easily within our teams. We have a very intentional small leadership group that we all love what existed at the farm, and so now it's translating very naturally into the museum. It's also not just translating, but is also reinforced and celebrated by, Artfulness of the space itself.

And the patrons who are very intentional about supporting the museum also see the benefit in building local culture in the same way that, that we do. And so it's, it feels like a very natural partnership [00:11:00] that then infuses our team very naturally, which is a huge gift. I know that sometimes culture building can be really difficult within companies.

Don Sherman: So when I know you were approached to come over there, what gave you. confidence or audacity that

think you could do

do it.

That's a big deal.

Katherine Elderslie: It was. But it also, the timing, I have an incredible assistant. We have such an amazing culinary team. Our front of house is unmatched at Elderslie and, thinking through the existing individuals on our team and the kinds of people, Show up, asking to participate.

It was very easy to say yes. Very easy to say yes. And, the full circle ness of having started, you know, as I was in my first opera when I was 11. And so having that the arts come full circle for me was just a super exciting thing to, [00:12:00] to think about. . Yeah.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: That's interesting. So Go ahead. Well, I just wanted to, so you talked about the front of the house and just if you would for our listeners, please kind of describe, because it's really a full production when you go to a restaurant and eat and people don't recognize the business side of that.

Right. You have the front of the house, the back of the house, you have all the things that make that happen. Yeah. Can you describe as to what the front of the house is? The back of the house Yes. And how that works.

Katherine Elderslie: absolutely. So the front of the house implies anyone working front facing with customers from the host to the bartender, to the service staff, to any busing, any additional staff in that realm.

The back of the house includes, you know, myself as chef or if I'm in the front as maitre d, but then in the back. Then you have your entire culinary team as well as the dishwasher. Now, one of the things that is not necessarily unique to restaurant culture, In my estimation, absolutely critical [00:13:00] to building healthy restaurant culture is that it's treated like offense and defense on a really amazing sports team rather than front and back.

Because in what, what starts to happen as that, you know, as those two kind of entities who are faced with very. Demands, you know, in the front you have the, you're charged with the customer. And I operate a chef led organization and I, you know, it all starts with the, literally with the carrot for me.

I believe very strongly that there, there is no food that I can make to overcome poor however. , if I make a mistake and you're an amazing server, it you can cover for me because the experience is so human. And it starts with the human interaction. And then [00:14:00] that human interaction is substantiated with these f with the food itself.

That starts with the visual and then you have to have the follow through of the flavors and all that. Yeah. Does that answer your

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: No, it does. I just I think people get so wrapped up in, the coming into a restaurant and not understanding the business side of it, that there are so many different elements that people just, you, it's not you just in the back cooking something, here's your plate. Right? Sure. There's different elements to that

Katherine Elderslie: Yeah. No

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: You know, quick kitchen math or, understanding the ordering process and what that looks like and

Katherine Elderslie: Well, and particularly depending on how you're sourcing for your restaurant, it's, you know, I write menus in a very flexible way so that, if Josh Millello, who's a grower at Strong Roots Healthy Farming, if his carrots failed, we're not just ordering carrots, we're finding something else, and we're constantly being creative with those ingredients.

We can continue to [00:15:00] keep a lot of our buying power local. Restaurants are responsible for an obscene amount of the economic activity in a community. And I think that as we, you

know, if, and we have such an incredible group of individuals in Wichita who are dedicated to that same process of.

Locally sourcing things intentionally so that we can keep building up our own community, not just, extending out to wherever.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: You talk about that ecosystem and how important it is. And so I'm curious.

What do you find that's unique about the Wichita ecosystem, business ecosystem? Because you're, what you're doing in assisting other growers or other people who are, that ecosystem is so important. So can you expound on that a little bit?

Katherine Elderslie: Well, and I think sure. I think that if, you know, if each person with. and [00:16:00] we all have some semblance of control over what that ecosystem looks like, regardless of, if you're the owner of a restaurant or you are working on the line the way on the line in the kitchen is where a cook is prepping, for example.

But I think that, that ecosystem, Particularly in somewhere like Wichita, we still carry these remnants of the historicity of how Wichita started in the bread belt, pulled up from the bootstraps. And there's a thriftiness and a flexibility I think that we have within our community that's unique.

I've had the. Pleasure of being involved with some of the, some programming with the James Beard Foundation and seeing kind of, it's, it just the, what ends up feeling a bit like a rat race on the coasts. I never would've been able to start as a self-taught teeny weenie farm chef

And grown to the, [00:17:00] you know, what we have now.

if I was trying to hustle in la right. I just, there's not room for me in Right.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Best

Katherine Elderslie: Yes. But I think that here we still have a very special sense of awareness of one another and of community, of, how we each contribute to one another's lives. That I think we as Wichitans have a lot to offer.

in terms of building the health of these institutions. The restaurant industry is not particularly known for great mental health or really solid careers. It's more, it's pretty rough and people get jobs and then they jump around from job to job. And I, but I think that here we have an incredible opportunity given, I mean so many factors, but even something as simple and not simple when you really get down to it.

Is absolutely critical, but the cost of living , to be able to make a living wage and move up

[00:18:00] in a very small restaurant that you just don't have elsewhere you know elsewhere. Yes. But, if you're thinking about comparison of here to somewhere like Chicago or New York or even Kansas City is, it's just a little.

maybe a little faster, not faster, but I just, we have a really special spot.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Love it. Excellent. Thank you for going over that.

Well, friends, it's time to hear for a word from our sponsors. We'll be back to hear more of 1400 by Elderslie

[00:19:00]

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: welcome back friends.

We are here with Katherine and she's telling us a little bit about the wonderful restaurant that she has just opened up and where Don is gonna be a sous chef on the line, And he's like, and

Don Sherman: it was just closed down .

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: No, but, in all seriousness, you've been at this and you know, starting any new venture can be extremely stressful, right?

You're putting your time your efforts into this to make concern that it'll succeed. How are you balancing, that act of work-life balance? Is that a thing?

Katherine Elderslie: It is an aspiration Okay. Alright. No, but I think part of the reason, you asked me previous. What gave you the audacity to say yes to this kind of project. And it's my team. I have an incredible team. I both at work and at home. My parents and my husband's parents both live in town, so we have the benefit of Wow.

Phone a friend on with [00:20:00] some regularity. Yeah. But we also have two little kids. Our daughter's 10 and our son is eight. And so there is, , I have the benefit of a necessary guardrail because of my kids. Cause like they're amazing and I love them more than all of it. So that helps provide the motivation to step back as necessary.

And then also knowing like, as.

as you work with a team, as you, we all continue to establish these habits in a new space. And also build trust together. But I mean, every new employee that we've had the pleasure of bringing on for 1400 has just been a sheer delight. And so it's made it easier as necessary, to step away.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: So with that, you said you had the pleasure of, phoning a friend and

having that support system. Sure. Can you maybe speak to, or, you know, speak to who you might admire or who you draw [00:21:00] inspiration from to keep going? I see your kids as a big part of it.

Katherine Elderslie: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I met a woman in, it was the before times, so in 17, 20 17.

Who caught wind of the fact that we had a Blackberry farm. Her husband was in town for his work, and she came with him on a trip, came out to the farm wanted to see the blackberries and she was in the horse barn actually at the time. And my father-in-law, who is everyone's biggest enthusiast called and she was like, you've got to come meet this woman.

She's a really big deal in food and da. And I was like, Great. Ran out there out of the kitchen, met her, she was absolutely incredible. And of course, went back inside, Googled her and she was the interim president for the James Beard Foundation. I was like, oh, okay, what did I say?

You know, all this. And then a year later I went to visit her in San Francisco. And it just, it, she has. [00:22:00] Essentially my fairy godmother in the culinary world, she's introduced me to so many other incredible, particularly women chefs. Her name is Emily Luchetti. But one in particular also Kathleen Blake.

She, I called her probably a week ago after a longer day, and I said, if I'm so glad to know your children because she has four kids. She's been a restaurant owner, James Beard Award nominee in. Busy, big restaurant in Orlando, and her kids are amazing. And so to have those examples of people who have done what you aspire to do with a well-rounded life is just awesome.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: I love that. Yeah, And so the Chamber, you're on this wonderful podcast right now. Yes. . You're a member and you know what, you open up a new restaurant. Sure. And you have this membership with the Chamber. , what benefits [00:23:00] did the Chamber bring to your organization like yours?

Katherine Elderslie: I think that there's so much, as I settle in, as a chef, a restaurateur, I'm a huge advocate for mentorship.

I, there is no way I would've been able to get very far.

one restaurant, let alone into the art museum without incredible mentors and the support of the community. And what the Chamber represents is this vast resource and advocacy for my restaurant through other professionals who understand so many different aspects of the business community, you don't have to do a focus group, you call someone or, connect through the chamber so that you can, that we as this amalgam of restaurants and offices and, all the different businesses that we all rely on to make our lives go I can [00:24:00] call.

so many within the chamber to to seek counsel and to learn from, as well as just the ability to build community together.

It's the many hands make light work. And I think that is something that the Chamber is doing beautifully in Wichita.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Wonderful.

Don Sherman: Excellent. So, you just opened a few weeks ago.

I need you to look in your crystal ball and tell me exactly what you're gonna be doing five years from now.

Exactly.

Katherine Elderslie: I don't think I'll be in Barbados, but

Okay. No, I think this next step into 1400 and just seeing on a daily basis. Being able to observe from my little corner within the art museum. The vast diversity and opportunity within our community I think is super exciting. And I, as the restaurant settles and the farm continues to hum along, I think that there's a huge opportunity to get into the community more [00:25:00] and to.

you know, just seeing all of the touring school groups through the museum in particular, I want to give every single one of those kids a radish and tell them about a radish and what it is and how it was grown. I think that there's a big deficit in often in just the exposure to healthy ingredients among kids.

And so I think that's something that,

would be a goal to be able to engage more with the community in that way. From, you know, especially from you have a captive audience. They're all right there, in there, right? so just lure 'em in. in.

Don Sherman: One more question before we have some fun, because you've been dealing with Ebony long enough and even. You have your limits.

I get that. But of course I'm not familiar with a kitchen, but sure. I'm gonna name four. I think they're chefs. They might be restaurant tours. I don't know the difference.

Gordon Ramsey? Yes. Guy Fieri. Okay. Martha [00:26:00] Stewart. Rachel Ray, which one are you like, or if I didn't mention the right one, who are you?

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: She said I, I'm me. I know, but I mean, let's get that

Katherine Elderslie: I know.

Don Sherman: I'll preface this word. none of the above. Okay.

Katherine Elderslie: No.

Don Sherman: Did I miss? Or is there anyone out there that you really not admire but you pattern or.

Little bits

Katherine Elderslie: Oh, all of 'em. You take, I, I'm a cherry picker. I'm gonna go around and I'm gonna take. Everything I can get from you and you and try to emulate it. I don't know. Well,

Don Sherman: Let's rephrase that then. If you had your choice to be dined or somebody cook for.

who would that be? That you just have to have their dish. If there's somebody out there besides your own

Katherine Elderslie: Oh gosh. Yeah. You heard about Chef egos?

Don Sherman: Yeah. I gotta, [00:27:00] is there anybody? Ooh, I'd love to be there.

Or at their restaurant, or

Katherine Elderslie: I don't, that is a hard

Okay. We'll get, think that there are so many, I listened to this amazing podcast and it was by the the New York Times food reviewer. Okay. And he was talking about during covid when, they did away with the stars. And then, he started eating in these different, like you go here for this particular experience and you ate in Batali's restaurant and everything was perfect, or you sat next to Thomas Keller and it was this perfect experience.

But then like there. . There's a young woman who works with us that makes the most incredible tamales, and I want to go to her family's party. You know, so

Don Sherman: it's just awesome.

Katherine Elderslie: Okay.

it's all worth so much in different [00:28:00] realms, and particularly in the culinary world. I think there's so many different opportunities to celebrate culture, have your very fancy moment.

Yeah, I don't know.

Don Sherman: Yeah. Hey, that's cool. That's cool.

Katherine Elderslie: I'll eat it all.

Don Sherman: You'll eat it.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: That's there you have it. Nice. But now it's time for some fun engagement

Don Sherman: ~Funment.~ Gonna do word association.

I give you one word. You give me one, say

Uhoh you ready? They always

get that glazed.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: That's the question. No I don't. The listener's ready

Katherine Elderslie: Good luck.

Don Sherman: It's not wrong cuz it's your word. So are you ready?

Leader

Katherine Elderslie: Emily.

Don Sherman: Success.

Katherine Elderslie: Peace

Don Sherman: College.

Katherine Elderslie: Oof. That's the word.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: That's the word.

Don Sherman: Okay, we'll go with that. it. worth it. Okay. Failure.

Katherine Elderslie: Opportunity.

Don Sherman: Entrepreneur.

Katherine Elderslie: George.

Don Sherman: Wichita. [00:29:00]

Katherine Elderslie: Home.

Don Sherman: Vacation.

Katherine Elderslie: Italy.

Don Sherman: Hero.

Katherine Elderslie: Martha.

Don Sherman: Wichita chamber.

Katherine Elderslie: Alliance.

Don Sherman: Family.

Katherine Elderslie: Worth it.

Don Sherman: Fun.

Katherine Elderslie: Bike.

Don Sherman: And this

Ooh,

Katherine Elderslie: Big mountain oh.

Don Sherman: And this should be interesting. You gotta tell truth too.

Katherine Elderslie: Okay.

Don Sherman: Beverage.

Katherine Elderslie: Coffee.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Oh my gosh. That's the thing. I think you're gonna come up with this nice wine. Exactly. You know that's gonna pair well. Well, with your goat cheese.

Yeah. That

Katherine Elderslie: you can

only, a Trione Sauvignon Blanc.

okay. That

Don Sherman: you can only get at 1400. There you go.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Like I have one word for you. Radish. You talked about radishes.

Katherine Elderslie: Learning.

Don Sherman: Excellent. Thank you for coming through. Truly appreciate you hanging out with us, and

Katherine Elderslie: Thanks for thanks for having me

Don Sherman: dealing with Ebony.

It is what it is. Welcome to my world,

Katherine Elderslie: Oh

Don Sherman: No, don't do . [00:30:00]

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Well, we appreciate you being here and having this wonderful conversation. We look forward to supporting that business and being there as often as we can.

Katherine Elderslie: Perfect. With your reservation

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: my reservation every

Katherine Elderslie: face on the host stand

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: You . Should. You should. No.

Katherine Elderslie: Don, you can come with her

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: He

Don Sherman: cannot. Thanks. I'm just like a afterthought, but I'm good with that

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: But friends, well, we hope to see you there at the restaurant overlooking the river. Yeah. We'll see you at 1400. If you would please like and share this

podcast and share it with any of your friends or circle of influence. Until next time.

Don Sherman: Peace. [00:31:00]