

Episode Title: **Ashley McBryde's Orange Stuff**

Episode Summary: In this week's episode, Sid Evans, Editor-in-Chief of Southern Living Magazine, talks to Ashley McBryde about candle-making during quarantine, the big break she got courtesy of Eric Church, and personal songs about her father and brother. Plus a wide range of recommended dishes, from smoked red velvet cake to squirrel!

Episode Transcript:

(Biscuits and Jam Theme begins - Fiddler's Barn on Epidemic Sound)

Voice over from Sid Evans: *Welcome to Biscuits and Jam, from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, editor-in-chief of Southern Living Magazine and I'm talking with legendary musicians and celebrated chefs about family, food, songwriting and Southern culture.*

Today's guest was raised on a farm in Fulton County, Arkansas, appreciating the simple culinary pleasures of a trip into town.

Ashley AX: On Sunday nights or Wednesday nights, right after church we could go to Dairy Queen and, I mean, there's no fast food around, there's not even stoplights where we grew up. So they had this chicken strip basket that came with fries and gravy. And I would be so excited to go get fries and-- I can't believe I'm talking about a Dairy Queen on a podcast that's about food.

Sid NARRATION: *Ashley McBryde's 2018 album Girl Going Nowhere proved just the opposite, earning her multiple Grammy nominations as well as CMA, CMT and ACM award wins. Released earlier this year, her new album Never Will is full of intimate stories of people dealing with love, loss and everything in between. Her songs have even been covered by country legends like Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood.*

On today's show, we'll hear how Ashley's family were game hunters, cooking elk, pheasant, venison... and even smaller creatures.

Ashley AX: We cooked a lot of squirrel when I was growing up. We lived 45 minutes from a grocery store. So, during squirrel season, my dad would let me go and get a couple of squirrels and show me how to clean them and all that, which, you know, it sounds backwoods. We did cook them. It's not like we ate them raw or anything, but now when people hear you ate rabbit or you ate squirrel, they're like, "wow."

Sid NARRATION: *Plus smoked red velvet cake, making candles during quarantine and much more this week on Biscuits & Jam. (Theme music ends)*

Sid: Well, Ashley McBryde, welcome to Biscuits and Jam.

Ashley: That's my love language! No, I have three: I have gravy, *and* biscuits & jam.

Sid: So we're off to a good start. Well, listen, I want you to tell me a little bit about the small town, that you grew up in. I believe it was Mammoth Spring, Arkansas. Is that right?

Ashley: Yep. So technically my address was Mammoth Spring, Arkansas, and I went to school in a completely other district. because we weren't near anything. And none of the buses came out that far, no matter what. So we kind of get to choose where we went to school. But I lived about probably six miles

from Mammoth, which is about one mile South of the Missouri line. So Mammoth Spring and Thayer, Missouri are right there together.

Sid: Oh, wow.

Ashley: So if you want alcohol, you have to drive the extra mile into Missouri, because Mammoth Spring was in a dry county.

Sid: We had the same thing in, Tennessee, Alabama. There was a lot of crossing the, crossing the state line for booze.

Ashley: Yeah, a lot of know before you go. Like if you're going to go camping in a small town in Arkansas, you're going to have to premeditate all of your alcohol.

Sid: So what are some of your fondest memories of growing up there?

Ashley: I was lucky because I grew up on a farm. So a lot of my memories involved working with cattle and finding lost calves. And I'm sure at the time when it was cold out, I was like, "Oh, if I have to fix another fence..." but you know, looking back on it, I did enjoy the work while I was doing it.

On Sunday nights or Wednesday nights, right after church, we lived on a dirt road that was about two and a half miles long, so from our house to the highway two and a half miles, and at the end of that two and a half miles of dirt was the church we attended, which was the Pilot Church of Christ.

It had about 35 people in the Congregation. We were definitely the youngest family. But on Wednesday nights and Sunday nights, we could go into Thayer, Missouri and go to Dairy Queen and Dairy Queen had, I mean, there's no fast food around, there's not even stoplights where we grew up.

So for there to be a Dairy Queen -- it was really cool, there was a liquor store and a Dairy Queen -- And they had this chicken strip basket that came with fries and gravy. And I would be so excited to go get fries and-- I can't believe I'm talking about a Dairy Queen on a podcast that's about food, but even better than that on Sunday afternoons, we would go to Fred's Fish House, really the only restaurant in town when I was growing up. The best hush puppies on earth and the best pickled tomatoes, hands down, on earth.

Sid: So was that some extra motivation to go to church?

Ashley: Yeah, and to behave. If you behaved well, which we did, my dad was a preacher, the first part of my life, so we learned really quick what Moses looked like coming down from the mountain. And so we were, and mom had that little pinch, she could do just right there between her thumb and the front of her finger, she could get under your arm, like a ninja. You wouldn't even know she was doing it. Uh, so we knew how to behave, yeah.

Sid: So, so you had a wonderful childhood, it sounds like, but, you obviously got an itch at some point and wanted to go somewhere else. When did that start to, uh, um, to hit you?

Ashley: I started going to bluegrass festivals. Um, I was three days old when I went to my first bluegrass festival. My mom was big in the bluegrass world.

She, um, she had a husband before my father who was killed when they were really young and he was a bluegrass musician. So she's always been really steeped in all that. So I've always been really steeped in all of that. And I always knew I wanted to do that. they have pictures of me holding a, a little yellow

Telecaster. And it's got like Kermit the Frog on it. I had a little plastic fiddle that had Mickey Mouse on it, and mom would let me go sit at the front of the stage. I had a little red lawn chair that was all my own and had a little Teddy bear on it and she would let me drag it up to the front and sit and watch these bluegrass cats play their fingers off.

And one day this band called the Tennessee Gentlemen said, "would she like to get up here? And kind of sit on the side of the stage while we play for a couple of the songs? And mom said, "Oh, she would love that." And I was painfully shy. I would cry if you talked to me. But mom said, "do you want to sit on the stage and watch them play?"

And I said, "yeah, I do." So I sat kind of stage left behind the bass player and after their first song, of course, the crowd erupts into applause. And mom said, she looked at me to make sure that it hadn't startled me. Cause I was little, little, little. And she said, "I looked at you and your eyes lit up and you had the biggest smile. And I thought, "Oh Lord, she's going to chase that the rest of her life." So mom knew then, that I had the bug. Um, and I think I had it figured out by five or six that I wanted to play music, whether it was for a living or not. I wanted to play instruments and make up songs and stuff. And by the time I was 12, I was like, "I'm going to move to Nashville. And I'm going to write songs for a living." And mom was like, "I know. I know you will."

Sid: Wow. You had your mind made up early. So tell me about your home growing up. I mean, can you kind of describe the house for me?

Ashley: We moved there when I was in the second grade. And it had been used for a hunting clubs. It was 411 acres. It was gorgeous, had three ponds on it. The Mayak Creek ran through the bottom of it with a huge swimming hole. This, this is like a Norman Rockwell painting, this swimming hole. 'Cause it even had a deep end, you know? It was like the better than having a pool, but the house I think was built in the early seventies. I know that because there was flopped velvet butterflies on my bedroom wallpaper.

And there's like a horrendously dangerous stair rail. It's like rod iron, that's all twisty. It would never be approved in a home inspection nowadays. In the living room and what we called the family room, but was actually where dad kept guitars and guns. Both of those had big sliding glass doors that led out to, a back porch that was a concrete floor, with a tin roof that always smelled like it had just been rained on. I don't know how they accomplished that, but it was beautiful. (Sid laughs) We didn't live in a fancy house, but we had enough room, for the four kids. Cause there's six of us kids, but the four kids that lived there and, uh, and my parents.

Sid: Oh nice.

Ashley: We had horses and cows and chickens and all that kind of stuff.

Sid: So who was the cook in your family?

Ashley: My mother is the cook in our family. You know, the only time I've ever seen my dad cook, he warmed up a burger from Sonic one time, like reheated it. That's the only cooking I've ever seen him do. Like opening a bag of beef jerky is my father's way of cooking.

He makes a mean cup of instant coffee, as well. But my mom can tell you anything and make it sound good and fix you anything and make it taste good. And when I found out this was called Biscuits and Jam, I'm sitting here on my couch right now and I can see my refrigerator because my house is also not big now. And my mom makes this freezer jam. And I was watching TV last night, about 8:30. And I thought I

really want a piece of toast with mama's jam on it. So I went and got it out of the freezer and had a little bit.

Sid: So what are some of her other specialties?

Ashley: It might sound cliché, but on Sundays we had, fried chicken or pot roast. But my favorite kind of stuff that she cooked was, um, my dad would go to like Colorado and elk hunt. So we always had wild game. We all deer hunted, for food purposes. So we had a big deep freezer outside that was full of quail, pheasant, venison, there was water Buffalo in there. We never hunted a water Buffalo, but there was a farm, in a neighboring town that that's what they grew was water Buffalo. And we swapped. Like we traded them, you know, a cow for a water Buffalo.

Sid: You can't get that at the Publix.

Ashley: No, and I was so surprised it didn't taste aquatic at all. Um, yeah, but, mom, it didn't matter the what she did with it. If she put ground venison in chili, it was the best chili you ever had.

If she happened to have, bison for a burger, it was the best burger you ever had. We even, and it's okay if people go "eww", we cooked a lot of squirrel when I was growing up. We lived 45 minutes from a grocery store. So, during squirrel season, my dad would let me go and get a couple of squirrels and show me how to clean them and all that, which, you know, it sounds backwoods.

We did cook them. It's not like we ate them raw or anything, but now when people hear you ate rabbit or you ate squirrel, they're like, wow. And I'm like, "no, it's just the kind of the meats we had." But mom was great. this year, I'm 37 years old. I've been trying, ever since I was a kid, I can make her mashed potatoes to a T.

It tastes like Marti made it now when I make mashed potatoes. And that's not even counting her icing in her homemade cakes, um, our mom made everything from scratch. And, as I grew up trying to figure out how to make things besides Easy Mac and besides warming up a Sonic cheeseburger, but I just couldn't get stuff to taste the way she did. And she would say simple things like, "well did you put vinegar in the water when you boil the okra?" No. Why would I think to put vinegar in the water when I boiled the, well, it just helps honey.

Sid: You didn't tell me about that.

Ashley: It's not in the recipe. I didn't know.

Sid: Well, I love hearing about the wild game. I grew up on a lot of wild game and have always loved it. And particularly venison. It's an underrated, meat, that's good in everything. I mean, lasagna spaghetti, you know, you name it.

Ashley: Anything you can use beef for you can use venison for, and, and it's guaranteed to be grassfed, it doesn't have to be on the label naturally raised and hopefully responsibly sourced, but, uh, there's no hormones injected into these animals. My dad was our game warden out there. And we took a lot of care, for our deer herd and our turkey population and everything. He was the one that told you how many points it had to have and who gets a doe tag this year. And, we always had feeders all throughout the property and then just to make sure everybody was healthy.

Sid: That's great. Well, so what did the holidays look like for you guys?

Ashley: Crowded. so six kids and then there's four boys. And three of those were married. And so we've got those guys and then you've got me and my brother Daniel, and my sister Aubrey, who got married pretty soon after that, too. So we got tons of people and everybody brought their dogs.

So now we've got, you know, we've got 25 people and 18 dogs. We've got grandparents and we would do, we would do a turkey, but a turkey is not going to feed 20, 25 people. So my mom would do a turkey. Right. She'd do a Turkey and ham. And then she would do these huge, like. I want to call them double stacked, things of lasagna.

Cause you can feed an army on a lasagna and the leftovers are always great because you know, the flavors kind of marry a little more overnight and, even if it sounds gross, I don't care a piece of lasagna in a piece of white bread when you're having to go do chores outside, super simple lunch. There's not like a recipe. Don't, don't pin that on Pinterest or anything. But, yeah, so a lot of lasagna we had a dessert called orange stuff and I still to this day, call it orange stuff.

Sid: Oh what's in that?

Ashley: Cottage cheese, Cool Whip, Mandarin oranges, a packet of orange jello. I think it's because we didn't have a whole lot of money that mom was like, I don't know, but put these in a thing together. And when you stir it all together, you chill it for a couple of hours and it's, it's awesome.

Sid: It reminds me, but you know, Martina McBride was on this podcast and she talked about something called fluff salad. Uh, it sounds in that neighborhood a little bit.

Ashley: Yeah. I think it's one of those, one of those things that in its first inception, it had to have been out of complete necessity. And these were the items they had. But to this day, when mama asks, "what do you want for your Thanksgiving dinner? What do you want for your birthday dinner?" I always say, "I just want some orange stuff and some mashed potatoes."

(Instrumental music break of Biscuits and Jam theme -- :10 fade in/fade out)

Sid: So you had a song called "Bible and a .44." And I believe it's about your dad. Is that right?

Ashley: It is. It's about my dad. There are some elements in there that were also my grandfather on my mom's side. He was the one that never went anywhere without a fishing pole. And you might be riding back from church, you might be riding to the grocery store if he saw a fishing hole that he thought looked good, he would stop. He kept his fishing poles in a gun rack. He drove a 1976 bright orange Ford truck. And he would just be like, we got to stop here for a minute. And he goes, sit on that dang guard rail and fish. So yeah, there are some elements of my granddad in that song too, but I wrote it about my father.

Sid: So there was a really big moment with that song where Eric Church asked you to come play it on the stage. And I'm wondering if you can just tell me about that and how that happened.

Ashley: Initially, Eric had asked if I'd like to come to Chicago and, see the show.

So we got there and up walks Eric's assistant and said, "Hey, Eric wants you to sing tonight." So, I looked at my manager. I was like, is this legit? And he goes, yeah, you're singing tonight with Eric. I'm wearing an Eric Church t-shirt, I'm wearing a Mr. Misunderstood t-shirt. So I'm like, Oh my gosh, I don't have anything

to wear on stage, which is fine. And, um, I said, well, I don't have a guitar. They said, well, you'll use one of Eric's hummingbirds, you know? Oh, okay. Well I know all of his songs, so, you know, chances are, I know the song and they said, no, he wants to do "Bible and a .44."

And this is the very first time I've ever met Eric right now in this second, we're walking down the hall, we pass each other. He stops, sticks his hand out, shakes my hand and says, "I'm really glad you came. Why don't you come during halftime?" Because on the Holding My Own tour, you know, he does a big set and there's a halftime break and another big set.

And, uh, he said during halftime come to my room and we'll run over "Bible and a .44" and he just kind of keeps walking and I said, okay. And he goes, it's in B flat, right? I said, yeah, it is. He goes, no problem. Just keep walking. And they let me go out into the arena, cause I've never played in an arena.

I've never used in ear monitors. I've never heard myself sing that way. I've always used floor monitors. So they give me some monitors. They introduced me to the man that is now existing in my brain. And he's like, Hey, I'll be taking care of the sound. I'm like, wow, this is insane. So I get to sing right then just for a sound check, to a completely empty arena, to experience the bounce back and the delay, the Doppler effect of your voice.

You have to ignore that. If you can hear it, you need to tell your friendly sound engineer, you know, to change something in your ears. I don't know what to ask for. And you know, it was all very overwhelming, but, um, it was a lot of fun and I stood in front of a house that night. Um, so for anybody that is not in the music biz, that is where the sound engineer stands and runs sound uh, for that you're hearing, the sound in the building. And I stood there until two big security guys came and said, "Miss Ashley, we need you under the stage." And they took me under there and they strapped a guitar to me and they sent my ass up that ramp. And I'm thinking, do not fall.

Sid: So you go out there and you sing that song in front of what? 18 and 20,000 people.

Ashley: Yeah, yeah. I think the biggest crowd I'd played for so far. The first time I played to a huge crowd, I had gone from playing with Mr. Willie Nelson, um, and when he was doing a theater tour. So those are like, 3,000 seaters. And I went to a 26,000 seater with Chris Stapleton. An amphitheater you can kind of psych yourself because there's only so many seats. And then the rest of that 26,000 is on the lawn. So you can kind of psych yourself through it. I only have to entertain, you know, for this many rows, but in an arena you have to entertain a bowl. I had never done that.

Sid: Well, it seems like it went over pretty well. And it's a wonderful song.

Ashley: Thank you. Thank you. I think I'm about to rerelease it. Um, it was on an EP that I did really early on, and I love that producer and I love the band that we worked with, but my original thoughts on that song, um, didn't sound that way.

I wouldn't have put strings, I don't think on that song. So I would like to find a way to make it sound more like when I sang it for my dad, which was, you know, on, on his guitar that I wasn't supposed to be touching to begin with. But by the time I wrote the song, I was a grown woman, and I was like, I wrote this song on your guitar and you're going to have to deal with it

Sid: Would you mind singing just a little bit of it?

Ashley: I wouldn't mind at all. For those of you playing along at home today, the songs in the key of B flat, and I had a guitar just chilling on the couch, which is totally normal. I was watching Netflix before our call and I'm always sitting here doodling around.

[Ashley performs "Bible and a .44"]

Lyrics heard: "He had a southern drawl like a red-bone hound / Every song he sang was my favorite sound / He'd be the last one off if the ship went down / The kind of man it feels good to be around / The kind of man it feels good to be around / He had hair as white as a cottonfield / He'd spin you a story like a wagon wheel / Never went nowhere without a rod and reel / Lord, I miss that man and I always will / I miss that man and I always will / He'd see through a lie like an old screen door / Taught me how to hunt and how to love the lord / He carried a Bible and a .44 / They just don't make him like that no more."

(Song fades out after the last line, and Sid comes back in over the song taking us to the break.)

SID NARRATION: *There's more with Ashley McBryde, after the break.*

BREAK

(EDITING: Instrumental music break of Biscuits and Jam theme -- fade in/fade out)

SID NARRATION: *Welcome back to Biscuits & Jam, from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, and we're talking with Ashley McBryde.*

Sid: Moving to Nashville, must've been a challenge. What were those early years like for you? Trying to make it.

Ashley: Comical. Uh, I moved, um, I was going to school in Jonesborough, Arkansas, and then I moved to Memphis, Tennessee and started playing in the bars.

And then I was playing so much in the bars that I was really missing a lot of school in Jonesborough. So I wound up dropping out and moving to Nashville. And I played at Dan McGuinness on Demonbreun Street on Tuesday nights from six to eight for half price drafts and half price appetizers. I played at a place called Christopher's Pizza, which was just down the road right there on Demonbreun Street, for pizza and then probably tips. I played a lot of places for tips. I played Broadway, I did all of that stuff. I found out that you can make more money anywhere else, playing in bars. Because everybody here plays.

Sid: And they're all good. (laughter)

Ashley: They're all good. And if you don't want to play for free, the guy that sucks, will play for free and they don't care if he's sucks or not. So it was a struggle and a lot of them were sports bars. And if you've ever watched somebody trying to play music in a sports bar...

Sid: It's tough.

Ashley: Oh yeah. They're pissed because you're playing guitar and the people that came to watch you play guitar are pissed because the football's on. And then, you know, there's always the managers that are like, can you just keep it to like a volume level where people can like still hear themselves chew food? And then like, why don't you just turn the radio on? I mean, you're paying me to be here.

Sid: Alright. So fast forward to I think 2018 and you released "Girl Going Nowhere," Such a powerful song and it seemed to resonate with people in such a big way. What was it about that song that you think really struck a chord with people?

Ashley: I mean, I want to just say, "well, it's relatable" and, try to leave it as surface as that, but I played the show in Memphis one time, uh, with Marty Stuart and I know this photographer named Katie Castle and she's awesome. And it's her birthday and for her birthday, all she wants to do is come shoot my set and shoot Marty Stuart's set.

And during my set, I see her sit down with her camera during "Girl Going Nowhere" sat in the front row. And then after the show, she came up and said, "you know, I'm one of nine kids from Grand Rapids, Michigan, and I've always wanted to make a living shooting, live music.

And they told me it wasn't possible. And since I've met you, I've gone from shooting you in a bar in East Nashville to shooting Marty Stuart, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Chris Stapleton and Hank Williams Jr. Your guitar is my camera." And so that to me is like the best explanation of why it resonates because somebody was told they couldn't make a living in radio. Somebody was told that teaching didn't pay enough. Somebody was told that being an artist was not the way to go. We've all been told no about something. But she said it so powerfully that night, I've never heard it said better.

Sid: Hmm. So Ashley, you have a new album out called "Never Will" And I want to ask you about a song called "Stone." Which is about a brother you lost.

Ashley: It is about my oldest brother. Yes. Who we lost to suicide.

Sid: I'm so sorry. Tell me about that song and why you felt compelled to write it and what you wanted to say there.

Ashley: He passed, in June of 2017. And so this is January. I think I have this right. January of 2018. So it's only been six months since his passing and, Nicolette. Hayford who I write a lot of songs with, happens to be in the same club as I am. She lost her older brother. And so we're kind of talking about how it sucks to be in that club.

But if you have lost a sibling, you understand the other people that are in your club, regardless of, of how that loss happened might happen to be a suicide. Her brother was, um, struck by a vehicle while trying to help somebody change their tire. Uh, so very, very different losses, but loss is loss regardless.

I wanted to write a song about how angry I was that Clay left because he left all of us a huge mess to clean up. He's got one, child. So now when Bradley, who's 27 now, when he gets married, now I got to go stand with him cause you you're not going to be there. When he buys a house, I gotta go check it out. When he has a baby, I gotta be there that night, you know? And she said, "you know, I'm not going to let you write an angry song about this." So we went outside and she knows how to make me laugh. She knows how to make me angry too. And she got me laughing and I cackled and it sounded like Clay. And I just start crying and I'm like, I sound like Clay when I laugh and she goes, well, go grab your guitar. So we went inside and sat down and talked about how I sway like you when I get nervous and I'm shy like you, but most folks don't know. Makes me tear up now thinking about it.

That's how it happened. And we sat there and I think in all, it took us about five hours from start to finish. But once we got me crying and un-angry. It really wasn't hard. All we had to do was sand off the edges. It was already there.

Ashley's song "Stone" starts fading in as Ashley says "But once we got me crying..." and song is heard at full volume for these lines, "I sway like you when I get nervous / I'm shy like you but most folks couldn't tell / I get the same shade of red as you did when I'm angry / I'm red right now 'cause I'm mad as hell" (music fades, Sid comes back in)

Sid: Well, tell me how you're doing, the last six months. Since the quarantine began, you've got so much going on. You're just coming off of these tours where you're playing these big stadiums. And then all of a sudden, the brakes get slammed on. How have you been managing?

Ashley: That's a really weird feeling whether you're wearing your seat belt or not, when you've got that much momentum and then it just stops. There's no airbag for that. And as entertainers and creatives, we don't know how to deal with that. "What do you mean I'm not going back out?" I've not been in one place this long since I was 17 years old and still lived with my parents. So, initially at first I was like quarantine for two weeks? Heck yeah, I'm going to catch up on my Netflix.

"I'm gonna make a bunch of candles," that didn't happen. No, I slept a bunch and I ate a bunch and like everybody else, I gained the quarantine 10 or 75 or whatever it is. I thought I would play guitar more. And then I got depressed because it wasn't playing guitar as much as I thought I would.

And then I look at this and I go, this ain't letting up. We do not have time to sit here and be poor, poor pitiful me. You take your slightly heavier self and you give yourself a purpose and you go do stuff. So, um, I took a couple of writing gigs. Uh, I haven't had a publishing deal in a long time. So if you're listening and you don't know what's entailed, this means someone expects me to write a song today. Every day.

And that was really all it took to kind of wake me back up. But if I've got to be still, at least I can be creative. Before I spoke to you, I'm writing, I've got a big sketch pad. And I started sketching out some lyrics. And then as soon as we're done talking, I'll sketch out some, some more lyrics. It's nice to have a purpose again. If you made a Border Collie sit still all the time, it would chew your shoes up. Because that dog has a purpose, and if you don't let it do that purpose, it's going to be an ill behaved animal. And so I'm trying not to be an ill behaved animal.

Sid: Uh, well, you have been doing some drive in concerts. Uh, how have those gone? That was a really creative thing to do. And it seems like people are really responding.

Ashley: Yeah. I was wondering because, there's a chance that people aren't gonna follow the rules, but I went and I did a drive-in show. And they followed the rules. Everybody stayed with their vehicles, their camping chairs were with their cars. When they, when they went to use a restroom, they put masks on, there was hand sanitizer everywhere in that parking lot. So it really gave me a lot of hope that while things may look different, we're going to get to play some shows.

So I did a small one here in Nashville, and we're about to do one in Athens, Georgia on a much bigger scale with Travis Tritt headlining. And it will be me and Caylee Hammack in support of him. That's gonna be a lot more cars than I think I played for like 60 cars. This is gonna be a lot more cars.

Sid: A lot more cars. Oh, that's great. I also hear you've been making some candles.

Ashley: Making lots of candles. In fact, yesterday I got in some new scents for the fall. So I've got 40 bottles sitting there. and I just give them away and I've got friends that, that have candles that they've burned. You know, they burn all the way through the jar and I'll text them, "Hey, bring me your bringing your jars, I'll fill them up this week." It's something you can do. It's not terribly expensive to invest in the tools. And it's something you can do that kind of shuts your brain off from everything else. My brain doesn't change the station when I'm doing candles. I'm watching a thermometer, I'm looking at the wax, I'm measuring things.

And then at the end of it, you have something that you made with your hands that you can give to someone else. And that always feels good. My mom always, she crochets and she always gives me dish rags and things like that and potholders, and that always feels really good for her to give them to me and for me to receive them. So when I see my friends, I pull out this box of candles I made.

Sid: Well, have you been doing any cooking? I saw you did a show with Trisha Yearwood a little while back. It seems like you have some barbecue skills, some grilling skills.

Ashley: Yeah, thanks to Ms. Yearwood, I've got a grill. And I started grilling everything. I even made a cake in my Traeger grill. I smoked a red velvet cake.

Sid: Dang.

Ashley: Right? There's like an app. You can look at recipes and everything. And I was like, you can smoke a cake? So I did that. So, I've gotten pretty good at steaks.

I haven't done a brisket yet cause I know I'm going to screw it up the first time and I'm really not looking forward to doing something poorly, but, Mama sent me a whole bunch of okra. So I've been doing everything you can do with okra. I've got some Crowder peas, Shelly Tackett left some sweet corn from Ohio on my porch the other night. So I'm going to grill some of that up, but it's usually every single Sunday I'm out there grilling, but it's most days of the week too.

Sid: Well, we might have to steal your, uh, red velvet cake recipe, smoked red velvet cake. That's that could be big with Southern Living. I think that could be a hit.

Ashley: Yeah, just smoke it. And then of course let cool and everything, and then use my mama's icing recipe. And it was the most moist cake I'd ever made. I was so impressed.

Sid: All right, dang. We got to try that. Well, Ashley, what are you looking forward to the most when we get on the other side of this?

Ashley: Hugs. I'm a hugger raised by huggers. And you know, now that we're doing shows and stuff, I get to be with the band, but only, um, we we're getting together to be tested right now, we have to pass multiple tests each month to make sure we're all doing right. And we're all isolating. And we've got a rehearsal coming up, which I'm very excited for, but I'm ready to hug. Without being like, "can you...? are you doing...? are you...?" Not having to even give those caveats? Like I'm ready for my hugs.

Sid: Well, me too. Uh, well, Ashley McBryde, thank you so much for being on Biscuits and Jam.

Ashley: I really appreciate it. Thanks for having me.

Sid NARRATION: *Thanks for listening to my conversation with Ashley McBryde. You can find her latest album Never Will however you get music.*

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