

Episode Transcript

Homemade Podcast Episode 38: Leslie Jordan on Chicken Salad and Choosing Happiness

MARTIE DUNCAN Welcome to Homemade. I'm Martie Duncan. On this podcast, I like to talk about the food that my guests and I grew up with. You know, those recipes that become part of you and stay with you even long after you may have moved away from your hometown.

Even if this is your first episode with us, it's pretty obvious, I'm Southern. And my guest today is as Southern as they come, too. Born and raised in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Leslie Jordan brought his Southern charm and downhome personality to Hollywood in the 1980s, and we've watched him in scene-stealing roles on TV programs like "Will & Grace" and "Murphy Brown" and in blockbuster films like "The Help." But during the pandemic, he's been blowing up our Instagram with hilarious stories for all of us fella hunker downers.

Along with his dear friend Travis Howard, another L.A. transplant, Leslie's been taking us to Instagram church Sunday mornings posting wildly popular old-fashioned, hymn-singing videos, which led to a just-released album of gospel duets with mega superstars like Tanya Tucker, Brandi Carlile, Chris Stapleton, and the one and only Ms. Dolly Parton herself. The album is called Company's Comin', and you can get it on Leslie's website or wherever you get your music. And, if that weren't enough, Leslie's got a new book, too, titled *How Y'All Doing?: Misadventures & Mischief from a Life Well-Lived*, and hasn't he just lived one. The book just came out yesterday, so you can find it in stores or online. And I wanted to bring him on today because he and I have some similarities in cooking styles, and he's got some amazing stories to share with us. So join me in welcoming my fellow hunker downer, the one and only Leslie Jordan, to Homemade. I am thrilled to see you, Leslie!

LESLIE JORDAN Thank you so much for having me.

MARTIE OK, well, I've been reading this book. I love it, number one. I can't put it down. OK, I grew up and I read every horse and pony book there ever was, too. I also begged my daddy every day for a pony. Unlike you, I never got one. And, at our age, I'm still riding. And you are too.

LESLIE Yes.

MARTIE I'm so excited about all of that. I just am fascinated. I'm also fascinated with the Delta. And you are too.

LESLIE Uh-huh.

MARTIE And there's just so many things. I'm like, oh my God, he is my best friend I never knew I had.

LESLIE I'm so glad.

MARTIE Me, too. I have loved you since "Will & Grace," but I've loved you before that on "Murphy Brown."

LESLIE That was — do you know that was — Murphy Brown, I would say, people always ask, "What was your break?" The episode I did of Murphy Brown was the seventh episode of the pilot season. It wasn't even a really big hit then. And I went in and did my part. We did a reading. And then Diane English, who wrote that show, pulled me aside. And she said, "Listen, we've given each of our regulars, you know, Faith Ford and Joe Regalbuto, Candice, and all of them, their episode. And we're going to give you an episode." Well, the next day we showed up and everybody was reading and the main cast would say, "Well, where was that funny joke I had — and they look at me."

But I — that, the day after that aired, everybody wanted to talk to me from Burt Reynolds. He thought maybe I could do a series with his current wife at the time, Loni Anderson. And Steven Spielberg wanted to meet me. I mean, I'm telling you, it was unbelievable. Pee-wee Herman put me on his show for a little while.

MARTIE Oh, my. Paul, in other words.

LESLIE Paul Reubens.

MARTIE I mean, you are it, honey. You are it. I—T with a capital I and T. How did that happen?

LESLIE You know, it's funny. You kick around Hollywood forever and ever, and you get this job and it leads to that job. But this Internet thing, I don't know.

MARTIE I don't either. I've been trying to figure it out for a long time, but you seem to have worked it out pretty good.

LESLIE Well, I was in Tennessee during the pandemic with Momma and the twins. I have identical twin sisters who are 22 months younger than me. And I got so bored I started posting on Instagram. And I posted twice a day for 80 days.

MARTIE Wow.

LESLIE Right now, when I post every other two or three days, I'm scrambling for content. I think, I got to make something up. Back then, I'd just get on there and talk, tell them what I was

doing and this and that. Anyway, a friend called from California and said, "Honey, you've gone viral."

LESLIE And I said, "No, I don't have COVID." I thought he thought I had COVID. He said, "You've gone viral." I said, "No, I'm safe and home." And he said, "No, no, not that virus. Internet viral." And I've yet to figure it out. I guess just one person told another person, who knows?

MARTIE I'm not sure how I got to you, but I have loved every second of it. And I love these Sunday hymn singings. It reminds me of my Uncle George so much. Oh, my goodness gracious. You and Travis out there in California with a guitar, just hanging out together, singing hymns on Sunday. I have loved that. And a lot of my friends, they started tuning in just for that. But a lot of people tune in for the cooking, when you were cooking a lot during the pandemic.

LESLIE Yes.

MARTIE You said when you went to make that cornbread that you couldn't find your cast iron skillet.

LESLIE I couldn't find it, but I found it.

MARTIE Oh, good. Because I was gonna send you one. I've got extra.

LESLIE Well you know what? Lodge, the cast iron skillet people, sent me five.

MARTIE Oh, wow.

LESLIE In all sizes. In fact, I pulled one out yesterday. I thought, why have I never used this just to fry an egg in the morning. This'll be perfect.

MARTIE Well, I have some that are like 60, 70 years old. I was going to send you one of those.

LESLIE Oh, I'd be so honored.

MARTIE Well, I will do it. I know how to get it to you, so I'll get you one. Let's just jump right into the cooking. This show's called *Homemade*. And we like to know all about your homemade secrets! So you've got a secret for cornbread. Tell us about it. While we're talking about cast iron.

LESLIE The only secret I have because, of course, bacon, you know, you got to have a little bacon grease. People say, well, just use some oil. Now, my grandmother kept that can.

MARTIE Oh.

LESLIE Honey, that can of bacon grease.

MARTIE My momma did. My momma did.

LESLIE On the back of the stove.

MARTIE That's right. It's stayed there every day.

LESLIE If that makes you a little squirrely having bacon grease, well, then you're not going to like this cornbread. But you know what? The secret that my grandmother told me long time ago was to leave it a little lumpy. And you know what? Everybody has a cornbread recipe. The best is just off the cornmeal box.

And also I heat my cast iron with the bacon grease on the stove and then pour that batter in so it'll be crisp on the outside but before you put it in the oven.

MARTIE I do the same thing. So, y'all, here's what you do. You take your bacon grease or your Crisco, whatever it is that you're using and you put it in your cast iron. You let it get hot and melty, like super hot, like hot enough if you drop a little drop in there...

LESLIE Mhmm.

MARTIE It's going to fry it. So then when you get your batter ready, you pour it in and it makes that beautiful crust on the outside of the cornbread, doesn't it? And the inside stays fluffy and, ooh, it's so good. I'm making some tonight.

You're from Tennessee and you were there hunkered down when you went viral. But now you're back out in Los Angeles. Do you find yourself cooking as much because you're working a lot now? Do you cook a lot or?

LESLIE I don't. I don't cook a lot at all. I don't have time to — the series that I'm doing, "Call me Kat" with Mayim Bialik, it's on Fox on Thursday nights at 9:00.

MARTIE Oh, it's so funny. It's cute.

LESLIE Well, we're having such a good time. That's where I am right now. We've been rehearsing all day long. But I'm putting in 12-hour days. You don't feel like cooking when you get home.

MARTIE Right. I don't know about you, but like when I would be on set at any of those TV shows, there's always candy and craft foods...

LESLIE Oh.

MARTIE I kind of pick around all day at stuff you shouldn't eat.

LESLIE All day long.

MARTIE And then you get home and you're like, "I already had 4,000 calories. I better not eat anything else."

LESLIE That's what I said yesterday. I said I'm gonna end up like a beach ball with arms. I can't keep eating like this because they'll bring in food, like all kinds of stuff they bring in.

MARTIE Right.

LESLIE Besides just the candy and everything. Well, they'll bring in whole meals of stuff.

MARTIE Right. Now, what's your favorite thing when they bring it in? What do you like the best?

LESLIE Well, they make us lasagna. A big thing of lasagna. And, you know, because it's California, it's always like, you know, spinach lasagna or something, you know. But this is really good. It's just got that cheese, that ricotta cheese and everything. I'll eat it. I don't care if it's spinach or whatever.

MARTIE Well, speaking of Hollywood, I want to ask you about this. This is kind of a food thing, too. Is it true that on your very first private jet trip that you were going somewhere with John Ritter and you didn't know they would have catering on the plane, so you showed up with a whole fried chicken and side dishes and everything? Tell me about that.

LESLIE I thought, well, wouldn't I get hungry. Linda Bloodworth Thomason and her husband, Harry, when they got all the money for "Designing Women," Harry bought some airplanes. And then after that, we were doing a series with John Ritter called "Hearts Afire." And whenever they needed to send us out for publicity, we'd jump on Harry's private plane. But the first time I thought we were gonna fly all the way to New York, I thought, well, that's a long trip. So, I fried a whole chicken. And I made some potato salad. And I had big jugs of sweet tea in Mason jars. Well, they laughed so hard at me because it was just beautifully catered, you know, they had all that. But what did we eat? Honey, we had fried chicken, potato salad, and iced tea.

MARTIE I bet you did. And you make iced tea like I do. You make it in the Mason jar. Tell everybody how you make sweet tea. Now, so y'all, if you're not from the South, you don't know this. But when you go to a restaurant or even if you just go to somebody's house, you go in and they sit down. "Honey, can I bring you some tea?" "Yes." "What kind? Sweet or unsweet?"

LESLIE Mhmm.

MARTIE They just say, "What do you want, sweet or unsweet?" When my British friends or my Northern friends here, they're like, "What does that even mean?" So we like sweet tea. So you tell them how you make it.

LESLIE I make mine very sweet. People say, "You're going to end up with the diabetes." I said, "Well, the sugars." My grandmother used to say, "You going get the sugar."

MARTIE You going get the sugar.

LESLIE And so, I take four Lipton tea bags and put them in a quart Mason jar, and then I pour that boiling — it's got to be a rolling boil. My grandmother said it's got to be a rolling boil. Then you pour that and you let it — five minutes, exactly. I let it steep. And then I put 1/3 cup of sugar. And that's how I make my sweet tea. But I keep a jug in the — I mean, it's in the kitchen constantly. It's one of the things always in my refrigerator.

MARTIE Hey, a question for you. How do you keep it from getting cloudy if you leave it in the fridge?

LESLIE I go through it so fast. I only make a quart of it.

MARTIE OK, so don't have time.

LESLIE Yeah. And I'll leave it out. You can leave it out. But you're exactly right. You put it in the fridge for too long. And that's my pet peeve, you go to a restaurant, and I want to tell them, "Now listen, you can brew tea every day. That tea has been sitting in the fridge and it's cloudy and it's nasty."

MARTIE That's right.

LESLIE You need to make better ice tea.

MARTIE That's right. Well, back to being like a big Instagram and social media sensation, how does it feel on the social media game at whatever age? You know, we don't discuss age in the South. We don't think it's polite. But what does it feel like? Like most of those guys who make millions and millions of followers like you have are, like, 18.

LESLIE I know.

LESLIE I'm at 60, 65. I'll say it. Sixty-five years of age. It just happened. The big thing that's come out of all of it is that Travis Howard and I have an album coming out.

MARTIE I've seen you all in the studio and I was going to ask you about that.

LESLIE And I sing duets with everybody from Dolly Parton. She sent — Dolly and I sang...

MARTIE You, stop.

LESLIE "Oh, Lord, man never dies. La la la la." She said, "I've sung that song growing up." I said, "We're gonna record it." I've got one with Chris Stapleton. "Further along, I know all about it."

MARTIE What!

LESLIE Tanya Tucker and I singing "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder."

MARTIE I was thinking about that today. I said, you know who he ought to sing with is Tanya Tucker. And now you've already done it. Dag gone.

LESLIE And then there's a rock group called the Osborne Brothers.

MARTIE Yes.

LESLIE And one of them, T.J., came out of the closet two or three days ago. I was told about it. He's the very first openly gay country-western singer, you know, with a big record deal.

MARTIE Right.

LESLIE And he and I recorded "In the Sweet By and By."

MARTIE What a song.

LESLIE It's wonderful. And who else? I'm afraid I'm forgetting somebody.

MARTIE Oh, I'm sure. But we're going to get that when it comes out. Now, see, I just thought we should do a cookbook together called, *Company's Coming*.

LESLIE Ohh!

MARTIE I know. So, shoot. But here's the thing. I had Jesse Tyler Ferguson on the show. You know, from "Modern Family." And he's done a cookbook with a girl from Alabama, named Julie. You can have your own girl from Alabama.

LESLIE Yes.

MARTIE Yeah, Martie knows parties. So we could have had a cookbook about coming over and food from your past and my past and how we grew up. What we love now.

LESLIE Well, maybe we'll do a holiday one about cooking. We'll call it *Deckin' Halls, Y'all*.

MARTIE That's a good one. I'm down for that. But, uh, I want to get back to the recipes for just a minute. Now, you make chicken salad a lot. Like a lot.

LESLIE A lot. what I do is, I've gotten — if I'm gonna be lazy, I'll just get a rotisserie chicken. But, usually, I cook a whole chicken, I stick it in, a hen, and just let it cook. And then I pull all meat off, and I've gone past — I remember my mother coming home one time from the church lunch and I said, "How was it?" She said, "Well, dark meat in the chicken salad."

But I like a little dark meat in my chicken salad. And then I chop all that up and I — it's so simple. Celery. And then I add Hellman's or Best Foods.

MARTIE Yup.

LESLIE Mayonnaise. People will say to me, you ought to try Duke's. I said, well, either one. But I've just always liked Hellman's. They call it Best Foods out here. And then lemon. I just squirt lemon on that and I'll eat on that. Oh, oh, boiled eggs.

MARTIE Boiled eggs.

LESLIE So it's actually — my mother's done that for years. It's actually half egg salad and half chicken salad because she'll chop up as many boiled eggs as you put an egg salad and mix it all together.

MARTIE I also noticed that you're like me. You're a no sugar in the cornbread, man.

LESLIE No, no, no, no.

MARTIE The most comments I ever had on social media was when I just posted the question, Cornbread? Sugar or no sugar? And boy, did the people come out of the woodwork for that one. I didn't even know I had that many people. I did see where you said one time that you don't write anything down. It's sort of hit or miss. You don't have recipes down, is that right?

LESLIE Mhm.

MARTIE OK, well, I'm gonna caution you about that because I lost my mama a long time ago and I have spent 10 years trying to recreate my mama's pot roast. And I finally got it. And what I was missing was the simplest little thing. It was bay leaf. And it, every time I would give it to my daddy, he would say, "It's not the same. It's not the same." It'd be the same pot, the same kitchen, the same everything, and I would get so frustrated because I knew he was right. But it was just a bay leaf I was missing. So you better get those recipes down.

LESLIE Well, I do. And what — have you, do you happen to own Fannie Flagg's fried green tomatoes cookbook?

MARTIE Of course. Of course!

LESLIE Well, that's, believe it or not, where almost all of my grandmother's recipes I found written down. But even when I'd asked my grandmother, she'd say, I ask her about her biscuits, and she said, "Well, you make a nest." And my mother said, "What? What does that mean, momma? Make a nest?" I said, "I know what she means. You just take the flour, make a little nest." And she said, "Then you put your shortening." And Momma said, "Well, how much?" And my grandma's little hand went up and she said, "About that. That much."

MARTIE Leslie, my mother did the same thing. Makes me want to cry. That's so precious. So biscuits are one of my things, too. I love to make biscuits. Do you ever make them out there out in La La Land?

LESLIE I do. Not enough. I do. Not enough, though. I just love biscuits. I'll eat a dozen biscuits with butter.

MARTIE I live by myself, too. I live by myself, too. So I understand. I — but you know what? They freeze great. So make them up...

LESLIE Do they?

MARTIE Oh, my gosh, yes. And cut them out, punch them out, and then put them on something flat and put them in the refrigerator till they make a little disk. And so I make half and then I freeze half.

LESLIE You mean you freeze the dough? You don't cook them.

MARTIE Yeah. Punched out, though. Yeah. You want to punch it out, but don't cook it.

LESLIE Oh.

MARTIE And put it in there on a flat surface and let it freeze hard, then you could just put them in a plastic bag.

LESLIE Mhmm.

MARTIE And then when you want a biscuit, you can make one, or you can make six or whatever.

LESLIE And how long do you put it in the oven?

MARTIE The same.

LESLIE Really?

MARTIE Oh, yes. It's crazy. But you — like you cook a biscuit at 450, right?

LESLIE Uh-huh.

MARTIE So it's about like that. So anyway, for us fellow hunker-downers, who live alone, that's a good little tip for you.

LESLIE There you go.

MARTIE You're listening to *Homemade*. When we come back, Leslie shares his keys to happiness and what it was like to work with the Queen of Country herself, Dolly Parton. We'll be right back after the break!

I'm Martie Duncan, and my guest today is actor, author, and all-around Southern gentleman Leslie Jordan.

All right. So I love some of your quotes and things in this book and so many of the things I've heard you say along the way on your Instagram, like, "Fried chicken don't take no sides."

Oh, that was so funny. But one thing that I posted on my Instagram today and I said, I was going to be talking to you and I put a picture of the book up. And I said, "What questions would you want me to ask him or what would you want to say?" And people are like, "Oh, my gosh, he's just like a ray of sunshine. He is so, so sunny and so happy." And so, I want you to tell us this quote that you've got about happiness, your philosophy on happiness.

LESLIE I think that happiness is a choice. Happiness is a habit. And happiness is something you work for.

People think, oh, well, I just want to be happy. And, you know, I don't know about happy. I think the better word is content. You know, happy? What is happy? Nobody is going to be happy all the time. But, you know, to reach a point at 65 years of age, where I'm perfectly comfortable with who I am, what I am, and the rest here on out is just gravy. So, it was a long journey.

MARTIE A hundred percent.

LESLIE You know, I got into recovery. I was a big drinker. In recovery is where they told me, "You need to write things down and you need to do it pen to paper. Because when you put pen to paper, you get clarity." And that's when I learned how to write things. You know, like, I was able just to reach a point in recovery that made me be fearless. I said, "I'm not afraid of anything." They said, "Oh, you're afraid of everything." And so I had — you know, what am I afraid of. Well, I'm afraid of heterosexual men. They just scare me to death. I'm afraid they're gonna tease or be mean to me. I'm afraid of, uh, you know, I just — I started. I came up with 80 fears I started writing.

And then my spiritual adviser said, "I want you to take all those fears, and I want you to write real or imagined." I said, "Well, I don't know the difference." He said, "Well, if a bear is chasing you through the woods, that's a real fear. That bear might eat you. But most of your fears are just imagined." You know, like I'm afraid that heterosexual men are going to be mean to me. Well, when did that happen last and when — you know what I mean? That's just imagined. When did you get beat up last?

So, I did a lot of work is the point of all of this. It's not something that just kind of happened. I have been born — I will tell you this, because I've watched people — I've been born with a huge capacity for happiness. And I thank God for that because I think, you know, that people just born with a better capacity to be happy than, you know, some. Because when I was younger, I was irritable, restless, and discontent, but I still have that capacity to be happy and I'm — I've been blessed with that. And I'll tell you who is the queen of happiness, is Dolly Parton.

MARTIE For sure.

LESLIE I've got where I got to meet her and sit and talk with her. And I thought to myself, I'm going to ask myself every time I get in a quandary, what would Dolly do? What would Dolly do?

MARTIE That's right. I put on my Twitter this week #BeLikeDolly. Who don't want to be like that? Giving away all those books to kids, all the stuff. I mean, everything she's done. I mean, let's face it, she's great talent. "9 to 5" showed us that. If you didn't know she wasn't more than a singer, you learned it then. Wasn't that the best movie?

LESLIE It was.

MARTIE I just loved her in that movie. I loved your quote about her. You remember what you said?

LESLIE I can't.

MARTIE You said, "Dolly Parton was like creme brulee."

LESLIE You can eat her with a spoon.

MARTIE That's right. So what song did you and Dolly do on the album?

LESLIE It's called "The Soul of Man Never Dies."

MARTIE Oh.

LESLIE And it's one of the hymns that I did not know. And my friend Travis said, "What?" And then when we presented it to Dolly, she said, "I sang that every Sunday. To Canaan's land, I'm on my way, where the soul of man never dies."

And she brings such joy. Because when she recorded it — because what you do is we went to Nashville and got the best musicians.

MARTIE Of course.

LESLIE And we laid down all the tracks. And then we came back to L.A. and rented the studio and I sang, and then we sent it to her. And she just put it. But listen, what else she added. When you hear the track, she talks! She's just so precious.

MARTIE Oh.

LESLIE She says, "I just love to sing because this is such a sweet song and it makes me so happy. Don't you think so, Leslie?" And so we went back in and re-recorded where I would answer her and we talked and then we'll sing a verse. It's just, it's precious. She said to me, "Now, do you mind if they sing on the record, too?" And I said, "Dolly." Can you hear me going, "No, Dolly, there's no room for your family? Just you."

MARTIE Yeah, don't.

LESLIE I said, "Dolly," and her family — she lost her brother recently, Randy died.

MARTIE I saw that.

LESLIE Her oldest brother. But she's number five in the hierarchy and she's so close to her family.

MARTIE I love that about her that she puts everybody first. I mean, all the time. And, you know, it's easy to push your family to the side.

LESLIE Exactly.

MARTIE Like, I am so busy with my work. I got to this. I got to do that. But she's right up there with her family, includes them in everything.

LESLIE She puts them all through school. All her nieces and nephews. She puts them through school for anything that they want. When I met her, I said, "Dolly, you may not remember this, but I was in University of Tennessee in Knoxville and I drove to Sevierville to Pigeon Forge long before Dollywood, any of that, to see you. And I can't remember where you performed." She said, "The high school auditorium." She knew exactly.

MARTIE I bet.

LESLIE She said, "That was 1974. That was the year after Jolene came out." And I said, "I was there. I was there."

MARTIE How about that? Now, I'll just say this. I've seen her a couple times. She is some kind of smart.

LESLIE She really is. And the reason she does so much work for literacy is that her daddy never learned to read or write.

MARTIE I didn't realize that.

LESLIE She said she told me, she said, "Leslie, he was the smartest man I know. He was brilliant, but he never learned to read or write." So that's why she has first-hand witnessed, how important it is to be able to read and write. And, oh, sends those books to all those kids.

MARTIE All those kids. Millions. Millions.

LESLIE Mhmm.

MARTIE Hey, earlier on, we were talking about learning to cook with your mom and your grandmother and how your grandmama would show, "How much do I put in?" and just put a little hand out and, "About that much."

LESLIE Mhmm.

MARTIE What did you learn to cook with your grandmama that you still like to cook now?

LESLIE My grandmother taught me how to make chicken and dumplings.

MARTIE Ooh.

LESLIE And it's not as hard as you think. And that, I haven't made that in years. I should make it soon because, you know, it's just my grandmother threw the whole chicken in, the big bones and everything. That chicken and dumplings.

MARTIE That's how the old folks used to do it. My aunt, who was older than my mother, that's how she did it. And then, you know, you just had to pick around those bones and it was all just fall off in the pot.

LESLIE Uh-huh.

MARTIE Did you have a big old chicken and dumplings pot? My aunt did.

LESLIE Yes.

MARTIE Like one pot, it was sort of dedicated to chicken and dumplings. Oh, my goodness gracious. Well, if you hadn't made it in a long time now, you need to make that.

LESLIE I have to.

MARTIE I'll be coming over for that. I'll just drive on over from Alabama. Did your grandmother make her dumplings? Or did she use refrigerated biscuit dough like a lot of people?

LESLIE No, no, no. No, no, no. She made her dumplings, and she would lay it all out and roll it, and then cut them in big, long strips. So her dumplings were not fat, big dumplings. They were thin and long. Like that. And she'd chop all of it and just drop that dumpling into where the chicken was cooking. Oh.

MARTIE What else — you don't mention much about desserts. The only dessert I heard you mentioned was the creme brulee. Um, Dolly. Did you not grow up eating a lot of desserts?

LESLIE We did. But you know what I loved about growing up, it's different than today? We didn't keep bags of sweets around the house like store-bought cookies and all that kind of stuff. If you wanted something sweet, you ate it. You know what I mean? It wasn't just sticking cookies in your mouth. My grandmother would make little tiny fried pies, little fruit fried pies. Her best dessert was red velvet cake with Divinity Frosting.

MARTIE My mother did the same thing.

LESLIE Isn't that something? That frosting was crunchy on the outside and then creamy.

MARTIE And you couldn't make it if there was humidity.

LESLIE: Nu-uh. It wouldn't set up.

MARTIE It wouldn't set up. I mean, seriously. Isn't it funny how a lot of people from the South have a lot of the same experiences?

LESLIE We do.

MARTIE Some of the ingredients are different. Some of the techniques are different. But, like, when the divinity frosting, she would take that mixer her out, I bet ya, and she'd have to beat and beat the sugar. Do you remember that?

LESLIE Yeah, yes.

MARTIE Did you ever have to help her with it?

LESLIE Yeah, yes.

MARTIE It would take forever. They said seven minutes. It would seem to me like 107 minutes.

LESLIE But there's nothing prettier than that, white Divinity Frosting.

MARTIE No, nothing. And tasted like melty lollipop or something on top of that cake.

LESLIE Something.

MARTIE So good. So good. Fluffy and sticky, you know, sticky. But if she did it and there wasn't any humidity, it would be sort of smooth.

LESLIE Mhmm.

MARTIE Sometimes you, you talk about the Delta in your book. The Mississippi Delta is important to you. I spent a lot of time in the Delta. I have friends who had an old homestead there that they've turned into a hunting camp. And I go down there a couple of times a year and cook big dinners for them and hang out and have fun. And we bring out the guitars and do some pickin' and singin' and that kind of thing. But are you a fan of the tamale? The Delta tamale?

LESLIE I am. But they're too spicy for me.

MARTIE Oh, they are?

LESLIE Sometimes they make them kind of spicy. I tell you, the thing that I love the most to eat is when we were all doing "The Help" in Greenwood, Mississippi, we'd go to these restaurants and everything was covered in Comeback sauce.

MARTIE That's right. That's the new thing. Comeback sauce.

LESLIE Comeback sauce. And I made the mistake, I was explaining it to somebody. I said, "It's kind of like warm thousand island dressing with a kick to it. This woman came of flying out of the kitchen. She said, my comeback sauce has 28 ingredients and it's not warmed over thousand island dressing."

MARTIE Oh, funny.

LESLIE You know, down there, I loved that they still had restaurants, that when the prohibition was going on, they were curtained, have you ever been in those old restaurants around there?

MARTIE Yes, of course I have.

LESLIE Why is everything curtained like this. They said, well, so, you know, you could warn them if the, if the cops were coming, but they could drink in tents.. Little tents or whatever.

MARTIE Yeah. I go over to Clarksdale a lot and there's a couple restaurants over there.

LESLIE Oh, yeah.

MARTIE That still have them. Speaking of *The Help*. You did a cartwheel in that movie. Can you still do a cartwheel?

LESLIE Uh-huh.

MARTIE How about that?

LESLIE I did that cartwheel and Tate said, why'd you do a cartwheel. It wasn't even in the script. And I said, well, it was so hot up here. Everybody was, you know, grumpy. I just thought it'd be fun. He said, well, I can tell you right now, it's not that to be in the movie. I said, well, fine. So we did that big premiere and there was my cartwheel, right in—Now, I went up to him and I said, did you decide to use my cartwheel? He said, no. Stacey Snider, head of DreamWorks. I mean, she—she runs the whole show, said she liked it and put it back in.

MARTIE I love it. So you knew. I mean, I am so thrilled that you did that whole Instagram thing because you make everybody happier, just these little things

LESLIE This has been so much fun.

MARTIE I'm just so happy for you. I'm so happy for this record that's coming out with Dolly and Chris Stapleton and Travis. And I'm so happy that that has resulted from all of us being on lockdown. And I'm excited about this book and thank you for being so generous.

LESLIE Thank you, honey.

MARTIE Of your time and of your of your spirit. And, uh, I just think it's wonderful all all all the world's blessings to you. Thank you for being a blessing to us.

LESLIE Thank you, honey. Anytime you want to call me, you just let me know.

MARTIE Leslie's hilarious new book - *How Y'All Doing?: Misadventures & Mischief from A Life Well Lived* is available in stores and online. And his fun new album called *Company's Comin'* featuring duets with Dolly Parton, Brandi Carlile, Chris Stapleton and more is available wherever you get music. You can also catch him on his new TV show, *Call Me Kat*, Thursday evenings on Fox and on Hulu, in his latest film, *The United States Vs. Billie Holiday*.

Next week on *Homemade*... we've got a special Mother's Day episode for you, including a conversation with Zarela Martinez, longtime New York City restaurateur and mother to popular chef and TV personality, Aaron Sanchez.