

Transcript for The Who's Dat Phat Girl Podcast - With Brooke Hoover
EPISODE #24- Cornbread Craving

Hey y'all, I'm Brooke Hoover. A Louisiana native, actor, writer and comedian. I've lost 100 pounds through diet and exercise or shall I say "lifestyle changes". My twenty year and counting health journey has taught me that just like taking a diet pill for weight loss, body positivity doesn't magically happen overnight. I'm working on re-gaining my self esteem and re-kindling my love affair with Cajun and Southern comfort food in a healthier way all the while juggling eating as clean as I can, re-establishing myself in the entertainment industry which, as we know, is historically fat phobic all the while showing my inner phat girl some love - that's phat with a PH - pretty hot and tempting. Let me tell y'all a tale or two...

As y'all know by now, for the past decade, I've been on a pretty intense health regime not primarily to lose weight but mainly because I've realized dairy, gluten and sugar make me a mean, hormonal sassy beast who wants to throw heavy objects. Therefore, what I eat in a day usually consists of kale, onions, peppers, black beans, egg whites, walnuts, salmon (wild caught when the budget allows) and tree bark. But, there are a few things that I will beast on guilt free. We know by now that includes biscuits and Doberge cake and king cake, depending on my mood. I don't like calling those beasting moments cheat days. I hate that term. What am I cheating on? A test? My boyfriend? My messed up crazy diet? Why should we feel guilty about what we eat? If your body is like mine, which it probably isn't because every body is different, it might make you pay for those cheat day foods later anyways physically. So, enjoy them full throttle in the moment. Enter cornbread!!!!

In south Louisiana, once you are of age to eat baby food, you are eating red beans (and rice) and always on Mondays. And, nothing goes better with red beans and rice (or barbeque, for that matter) than cornbread. But, see, I think there are two kinds of people. Those who like to eat cornbread *with* something and those who celebrate cornbread on its own as the golden superstar that it really is. That'd be me!

My momma and dad, now divorced, may have disagreed on a lot of stuff, clearly, but they always agreed that cornbread is a delicacy that should be enjoyed solo. So, for the Hoover's of 19526 Creekround Avenue (don't Google map the house now. It looks sad and unkempt.), cornbread was served up as breakfast, dessert or any ole time we pleased. And let me tell y'all how my momma made it

Get a box of JIF Cornbread

Bake it as the recipe says

Add a packet or two of your favorite sweetener. Of course I'm a stevia girl but back in the day all we had was Sweet N Low so I'm putting white light on myself right now just thinking about all the potentially toxic garbage that that pink stuff contains (see episode 21 chemical warfare)

Go crazy and add REGULAR sugar if you shall

Bake that bad boy.

In a cast iron skillet, of course

Take it out when it looks 88% done. If you cook it to perfection or burn it, you're

done. NO GOOD.

Grab a big ass thing of butter and put it on top.

It needs to be slightly raw in the middle but don't worry y'all it'll cook up. We don't like our cornbread gritty or having that kind of almost fried crust in the Hoover household y'all.

Y'all, I have tried making and tasting several cornbread from scratch in a variety of variations including Bobby Flay's jalapeno cornbread and nothing compares to this \$1 a box "hack". HACK" isn't the right word. Pure genius is. And, I should let y'all know because if I don't, my momma and my dad will, there used to be a time when you could buy the JIF cornbread mix for 10 cents a box or 10 for a dollar.

Now, I shall tell y'all a tale about a very deep cornbread craving I had while driving through Hudson County, New Jersey recently. That is, if you care to go on the journey with me.

I'm driving along River Road in Edgewater, New Jersey, a lovely town comprised of mainly condos, rich AF peeps and Canada geese. As I drive past Mitsuwa Marketplace, I start having this HUGE hankering for cornbread. Luckily, I'm not far from Whole Foods which sells lovely fresh made bricks of cornbread wrapped up in their non eco-friendly Saran Wrap goodness. So, problem solved. Craving fed. Or, so I hope.

I go to the bakery and I plough through it like a high hippie on a mission. I know sometimes people think hippies are aimless so that's why I felt I had to throw that in there but see, my goal in life is to be more like a hippie. I see some containers with a dozen per pack of small cornbread loaves on a petit table among other pre-packaged baked goods ready to sell. But, do I really want a dozen baby cornbreads? No. Will the consistency be the same as their golden bricks of cornbread? Doubtful. I want ONE piece of it with the PERFECT consistency. Maybe two pieces TOPS so I can bring one home to my momma.

I pace up the cow butter aisle. No luck. I pace up the vegan butter aisle. No luck.. I pace by the Kombuchas and look to see if they're on sale. I can NOT find the godforsaken cornbread bricks I am searching for.

I look by the soup. That's usually where they keep the single cornbread bricks. NOTHING. I see an employee on the bakery floor. I say to her, "Excuse me, I LOVE your cornbread. Can you please tell me where it is?" She helps me look around. But She doesn't know where it is either. She doesn't understand my love of cornbread so I try to explain how important it is to me. "I'm from the South. And, y'all are the only place I know of up here where I can get something close to it." I explain to her that my oven has broken and I'm waiting on the new one that I got 40% off so I can't just go home and make JIF cornbread myself.

She points to the dozen pre-packaged little breads. I take a deep, conscious

breath because I really want to scream. I tell her that those won't work. I apologize. And, I then feel the need to explain why those packaged cornbreads won't work. She nods, trying to understand. I start to feel guilty because I am becoming my worst nightmare: I'm that woman in Whole Foods getting incredibly specific about overpriced food. I try to make up for it by telling her how cheap the JIF packets are and how that would normally be my MO because that is really how low key And down to fricking earth I am. I'm still not winning her over.

She brings me over to the bakery counter itself where all the magic happens. (I mean have you SEEN their tarts and cakes at Whole Foods?) She's done with me. I talk to the lady at the bakery counter. I explain my situation. She tells me where the cornbread usually "lives". Right by the soup. Where I already looked. To placate her (and myself...and because I was raised right) I go look over again where I have, at this point, already looked about five times. I come back to the bakery and I meekly and apologetically tell her that it's not there. She says they must be sold out. I ask her if they happen to have any little pieces in the back. Or, even, at this point, crumbs or the crusty burnt part from the sides. She apologizes and tells me it is her first day. She wants me to stop annoying her, I'm sure. I tell her, "best of luck on your first day. I love this store. I love your cornbreads" Meanwhile, I just want to sit on the bakery floor and throw a tantrum like a two year old with the Melissa and Doug rattle in aisle three.

Crestfallen, this is a good time to use the word crestfallen, I cross by the checkout lines towards the exit. That's when I see a couple checking out. I see something yellow and magical in the lady's hand. It is a brick of golden cornbread.

I run over to the couple and I say, "Excuse me. I LOVE the cornbread here. Could you please tell me where you found it?" They tell me over by the soup. The cashier agrees with them and suggests I go grab some quickly. I nod, trying to humor them, acting like fixing to go over yet again to check by the soup for the eleventh time. But, then the couple tells me what I already know...They got the last piece of cornbread.

I have two gut instincts, if that is at all possible. First, I want to ask them if they'll upsell it to me. Secondly, I want to ask them how the hell long they were shopping because I was in that baked goods area for a good thirty eight minutes and I would've noticed them holding that yellow brick of gold baby who deserves to be with their rightful mother, ME. Instead of going with my gut, I tell them thank you and then I feel the need to add, "I'm from the South so I love my cornbread. You two crazy cats enjoy!"

I put my thinking cap on which is hard to do when you have an intense food craving (and for me actually extremely difficult after I eat carbs. Which is the main reason I avoid them. This Gal has lines to memorize, rescue dogs to entertain and things to think about, okay?) So, I call up my Momma at the florist where she's working. I tell her it's an emergency. She starts panicking and I tell her it's more of a low key emergency and that I need to know if she has any idea where I might get some cornbread. Stat. Momma says, "why don't you go over to the deli department at ACME. Mr Tim who runs it is from Alabama, remember? He has cornbread there

sometimes.”

So I ask Google to call Acme for me while I cruise through Hoboken. Don't worry my phone is lodged in my bra strap and on speaker. After ten minutes on hold I get the deli department, “Hey! I have a crazy question. But, do y'all make cornbread in house and sell it by the slice or brick or whatever I should be calling it?” Deli employee says yes they do. I say, “Yay! Do you have any left?” No. Of course they don't. I'm getting frustrated but also I'm proud and honored at the same time that these Yankee folk like cornbread so much the grocery store bakeries are selling out of it!

Just when I'm thinking to myself, “Screw it. I'm just going to go home,” Momma calls me and says, “Baby, why don't you just go to Sunoco? They have great baked goods there.” I'm like, “Momma. Sunoco. the gas station. Good baked goods?” Momma says, “Yes, Baby. That's where I get my black and white cookies and my whoopee pies.” I roll my eyes and sigh. I have told Momma many tales about how she should avoid this kind of stuff. But right now all I want is to STUFF this kind of stuff into my face. So, I pull up at Sunoco, which is like our version of Cheers. Momma has always loved gas station convenience stores and since 1980 something has always established one as her local home base and makes friends with all the employees. Going there every morning is her ritual. They all know our names at Sunoco because Momma used to go there for her Carlton menthols 100s before she quit and she now goes there for her Diet Cokes and clearly now her black and white cookies and whoopee pies.

So, I go into Sunoco and tell our pal Danny hi. He asks how my Momma is doing. I say, “Danny, I've been running around like a Cajun girl in Hudson county with my head cut off looking for some cornbread and Momma told me y'all have some good cornbread.”

He looks shocked. Maybe there is a look of warning on his face, even. I disregard it. Danny asks me why don't I just go home and make some from scratch. He says that since I'm from the South, he knows I can make some good cornbread. I explain our stove is broken and the new one hasn't arrived yet. Also I tell him about the Hooverized JIF secret. He seems intrigued but also slightly hurt that I would ever think of making cornbread from a box kit, kind of like a kid learning that Santa actually only exists in our hearts.

Danny points to the prepackaged baked goods area. I march over and notice the logo is a yellow, white and green daisy, which appropriately says Daisy's Bakery. It looks as appealing as any gas station cornbread is going to get. Instead of being golden, it is more yellow as in yellow dye #26, red dye #40's cousin. I buy it and thank Danny. And, I promise him when I get my new oven up and running that I will bring him some semi-homemade Hooverized JIF cornbread.

Finally, three hours from when I first set out, I get home. I tell the rescue fluffs, Annie and Archer, that I love them but that I just need a moment to myself with my cornbread. (This is one reason why I don't have kids. Dogs understand things of this nature. Kids want to breastfeed till they're twelve and then they hate you when they're teenagers and when they're adults, those ingrates put you in a nursing home.) I put the gas station cornbread on the table and get out this little purple plate because, geez, now I need to take a picture of the cornbread and make

it Instagram worthy.

I open up the Daisy's package and some of the cornbread bits stick to the top of the plastic wrapper. Okay. That means it's moist not dry. Which is good. Oh, yeah. Okay. Let's get over the fact that I just said "it's moist not dry." I wipe a little of the crumbs stuck to the plastic off with my finger. I debate licking my finger. Who's going to judge me? I look down at Annie and Archer and they are smiling up at me like I'm the best thing since sliced cornbread.

Then I debate some more because should the first taste of the cornbread come from a finger lick or from an actual bite? Screw it. I lick my finger. The moist cornbread crumbs taste like tears of joy (and pain) and a plastic Barbie doll (don't ask). But, I worked so hard for this cornbread. And, I don't like to waste food. And, Annie and Archer are Paleo so I can't give it to them. I sit down and bite into the cornbread. The bread itself tastes a little bit better than tears and Barbies. It tastes like sadness and Entenmann's cake (which, I'm sorry to those of you who love Entenmann's. I just think packaged cakes should be used as door stops. Says the girl who's fixing to eat packaged cake from a gas station). But, hey it's still good enough for me.

It's the PERFECT texture though. A great "crumb" as they always say on shows on the Food network. I enjoy it as much as anyone can enjoy eating gas station cornbread.

However, several hours later, I start to have this weird headache. I worry it may be an aneurysm because my dad had one and says it is the worst headache in the world. This isn't the worst headache in the world. I'm tough. Then, I start getting stomach pains. I become nauseous and woozy for the next seven hours. I feel as if I am being punished by the Gods of the Southern Wild and all the Grannies, Nanas, Ma Maws, Maw Maws, Mee Maws and my African grey parrot Wofat up in heaven are royally pissed at me.

I start cursing the gas station cornbread. I fear that it has given my food poisoning much like the Wal-Mart celery a few weeks ago. (Don't ask.) Then, like a demon leaving my body, the headache and nausea leave as seamlessly as they came on.

I curse the cornbread some more for good measure. Then, I apologize to God for cursing so much for fear that I'll be punished and get sick again. Then, I remember aside from the cornbread I also had beasted on chana masala and Kombucha from Whole Foods. But, there's no way spicy Indian food and a drink high in probiotics could be the culprit of my stomach woes. It's the fault of the food that's supposed to be a cheat day food right?!

I think the moral of my long winded story is sometimes the journey of finding the food or getting the food is more fun than eating the food itself. But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't enjoy those "cheat day" foods. I've learned to ask myself though when I want a comfort food or a not so healthy food, is it the experience I want or the actual food itself? Is settling for second best really going to satisfy that craving? What is the real craving, at the end of the day?

Thanks so much for listening, y'all. It is my hope to inspire, uplift and entertain you with this Who's Dat Phat Girl podcast. So, if you're HUNGRY for more, you can book

me to speak or perform my solo show that inspired this podcast Phat Girl Costumes written by yours truly and directed by my best bud Brian Lady at your virtual or in person event. Please visit Brookehoover.com/fluffybuttproductions or email me at contactbrookehoover@gmail.com for more information. And, let's follow each other on instagram - I'm @Br00keH00ver and those O's are not the letter O but they're ZEROS. Not because I want to be a size 0 but because I guess I'm just so clever with my late 90s Yahoo! self

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