

## Transcript for The Who's Dat Phat Girl Podcast - With Brooke Hoover Episode 5 - An Ode to King Cake

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...

Do y'all remember the movie My Girl? I know I sure do. When Thomas J unexpectedly passed away, it really shook me to the core. I loved that movie and it's still one of my favorite movies. I actually did a play with Anna Chlumsky ages ago and she was so nice and everything I wanted her to be. So, she was so nice in fact that when my dad actually cornered at the play's after party and said, [Dad's voice, heavy deep Southern drawl] "Anna, I cried when Thomas J got stung by all those bees," and she kept talking to him even though I had warned him NOT to bring up My Girl.

But, let's bring up My Girl, y'all. In the beginning of Vada Sultenfuss's summer writing class, she writes an ode to Ice Cream which is actually just oh so vanilla. Pun intended. It's sweet and cute but doesn't have a lot of depth. So, inspired by that ode to ice cream poem and Vada Sultenfuss's journey, I wrote a poem about something I really like, King Cake. Whoop, here it is:

### Ode to King Cake

Yeasty and risen, a cake for a King  
You come in the shape of a large oval ring  
Cinnamon cream cheese or Zulu if you're bold  
Crusted in sprinkles, green purple and gold  
Devoured and sold once a year for Mardi Gras  
Watch out of the baby. Don't break your jaw.

They say you don't fully appreciate something until it's gone and that's exactly how I feel about King Cake y'all. Back home from January 6th, the epiphany till Mardi Gras day which is 40 days before Easter it's Carnival and therefore king cake season. So while many peeps up here up North or out in Hollywood or anywhere else are whining about their holiday food binges and talkin' about New Year's resolutions, in Louisiana, Christmas is just like a pre-game for more feasting and beastin' during Mardi Gras season.

So, back in the day, growing up, king cake was everywhere from church kitchens to school home rooms to girl scouts after school to my dad's office kitchen to grocery

stores, gas stations and sometimes even at my own house. Now Momma Anne was very careful about keeping sweets in the house because [Momma's voice], "If it's in the house, I'll eat the whole thing, baby." And, she will, baby. She will.

So, I had had so much King Cake around me that I just went through this king cake burnout. I had had enough of the sometimes stale king cakes and getting too many sprinkles stuck on my lips which were always covered in Lip Smacker gloss - y'all remember those and sprinkles all up in my crevices - don't even ask.

Then I came up here to New York for college and people up here were obsessed with asking me about King Cake so Momma started shipping them up here for me to share with all my friends.

And then I started getting annoyed that you could back home in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, go pick up a king cake at Winn Dixie for \$10 - \$15 but to get them shipped became at least a \$60 plus endeavor because you're mainly paying for the shipping, you're paying to make sure it stays fresh and of course you're paying for the fanfare (which is like the doubloons, beads and a baby Jesus in a sticky Ziploc baggie of course)

So, screw this. I told myself. I don't need this. I lied to myself. I don't need the carbs or the sugar or the sprinkly mess, I convinced myself. And, I really, really had told myself this and believed in this for a while.

And, then I just several years ago started to really, really miss king cake. It reminded me of those cool but never cold late January mornings back in Baton Rouge driving to school kind of feeling a little down but knowing at least one maybe two or even hell, three king cake parties awaited me that day. I missed laughing at the tale of Momma back in the 80's giving a random person - I think they were from Holland - on an airplane a whole king cake because like a good ole Louisiana Cajun woman, Momma traveled with five or six and she just happened to have extra and then later Momma panicked because she forgot to tell them about the baby inside. This is when the babies came shoved inside the king cake. Nowadays, they come outside and you personally place them. Probably because there were too many a lawsuit. Ah, those were the days.

I even missed the stale two day old king cakes when you were just feigning for something sweet and most especially I missed the leftover icing dripping remnants in the center of the king cake ring that I used to scrape up with a plastic butter knife and lick. I missed the high and low sugar coma. Well, not the low. I missed the high. The high of Mardi freaking Gras season, y'all.

Over the years when I wasn't in Louisiana, when I was in New York or New Jersey, I attempted to make my own king cakes. That is something you should NOT try at home, y'all.

There was one time we tried to make king cake using a Mam PaPaul's (which is a popular Louisiana mix to make Louisiana baked goods or things easier. It's like Zatarin's)

It was a Mam PaPaul's Box Mix. We tried this in North Carolina in the mountains and we failed to realize that we had to change the recipe to the high altitude version you have to do up there and it just baked up nothing but disappointment. But, the festivity of it was fun and my friends and I still remember that baking extravaganza.

Or, like the time we had a king cake party my first winter in New Jersey and Momma sent me one king cake and last minute I panicked that too many people were coming and it wouldn't be enough king cake. Louisiana people, Cajun people hate never having enough food. So I tried to make my own, leaving it out for the yeast to rise or proof or poof up on top of my washer but the consistency was more like that of patio furniture.

Or, there was a time I made my own Sandra Lee semi homemade concoction with store bought crescent roll dough and cinnamon cream cheese and stuffed it in there while it tasted good, but it didn't taste quite like king cake and instead of the dough baking up into an ovular ring, it looked like a phallic symbol. I'll try to find a photo of that piece de resistance and post it on the ole instagram, y'all.

Nowadays when people ask me where to order from, I say Manny Randazzo's because that name is fun to say like [New Orleans "Y'at" Accent] Manny Randazzo. My friend Kyle and I we do this New Orleans Y'at accent. [New Orleans "Y'at" Accent] "Manny Randazzo. I don't know if I'm doing the accent right. Kyle actually does it better.

Or I just say Gambino's considering they're the OG's but I feel so out of touch, I don't even know who to recommend to order a king cake from anymore. It's just been so long. I hear that the Dong Phuong (I hope I'm pronouncing that right) but they make like these rock star tastic King Cakes so rock star tastic in fact that you have to wait in line starting at like 5am to get them and they have like a three king cake per person limit. I've asked my dad to go get one and ship it to us but he's avoiding my calls. He probably doesn't want to get in line as early as you would for a New Kids on the Block Reunion concert for a [Dad's voice which is a deep Southern drawl] "damn King Cake, Brooke." So my options on Dong Phuong, they're out for the time being.

But, in the middle of working on this podcast episode's outline for king cake, I did have two fun king cake occurrences occur. I COULD have ordered one for myself, yes, but I felt weird about doing that. Like I didn't deserve it maybe. I still don't know why. And, neither does my therapist.

But my friends John and Margaret have an awesome phodeo - phodeo? What's that like a photo rodeo? Oh no I don't condone rodeos. But, anyways they have this awesome photo studio in their home in Clinton, New Jersey. Precious little town. I love Clinton. Not as much as New Orleans. But, almost as much as New Orleans. So, they offered to do a photo shoot for me and we were planning out the album cover for this here podcast. And I told John I wanted to show the balance that I'm struggling with that of healthy foods with Louisiana comfort food and be wearing a bikini to show how I'm exposing myself that doesn't sound too good. Showing my vulnerability. You know I just wanted to wear a bikini cause I haven't worn one since I was three. And, I told John I'd have like a

chocolate layer cake in one hand and my beloved collard greens, the healthy food, in the other hand. John says, "Well, why not have some Louisiana food in one hand instead of just a piece of cake?" He suggested Jambalaya and I said that doesn't photograph well. I thought about having Momma whip up a batch of pralines but - we will talk about pralines in another episode y'all. Yes we shall. But, [sing-song robot funny man voice] pralines don't photograph well, either. They look like little baby turds. So, actually, there's a lot of Louisiana comfort food that does not photograph well IMHO (in my humble opinion). But, it tastes great. But, there is one Louisiana food that photographs beautifully: King. Cake.

So, I go on a murderous rampage trying to get a king cake to me pronto at the snap of the fingers in Northern Jersey in the dead of winter, which is King Cake season back home but they don't yet quite consider it Mardi Gras season up here yet. And, the photo shoot is in three days. So, I kept saying to Momma, "If we lived back home, we could just drive up to Winn Dixie and get one like that." But, obviously in New Jersey, even in [Pace Picante Sauce cowboy voice] New York City, it's not so easy, y'all. Not. So. Easy. Not like the Big Easy. Ah. That was cheesy. What am I doing?

Momma and I start Googling who has king cakes up in New Jersey or New York. I call my dad and beg him to go get me a Dong Phuong King Cake and he says, [Dad's voice, deep Southern drawl] "I'll look into it tomorrow." My dad doesn't get in a hurry for anything. So, I cannot rely on him for our king cake dealer. So he's out. I start looking at king cake places back home to order from and I just can't stomach paying \$75 for a pastry because most of what you're paying for, like I've said before, is the shipping.

And, then I remember last year, I'd gone on a similar king cake search escapade. Not necessarily needing a king cake prop for a photo shoot, but I was just having a craving and I needed something fun to do because you know the COVID quarantine was driving me crazy and I remember that one of my friends told me that WHOLE FOODS sells them. So, Momma and I, for the king cake photo shoot this year, we start calling two nearby Whole Foods and of course no one answers because your whole paycheck clearly isn't going to the customer service department at least not at the Whole Foods in Edgewater or Weehawken New Jersey. [Quoting "Muriel's Wedding"] "They're terrible, Muriel." Ah, do you remember that movie, "Muriel's Wedding"?

So, we branch out and I call Millburn where the bakery man says [Brooke does a not so good New Jersey accent] "I know what you're talking about but the shipment hasn't arrived yet." That's my New Jersey accent.

And then I realize there's a whole foods in Newark. Actually a really cute Whole Foods. I'm like they might have it. They might like be the golden ticket. So, I call them and ask for their bakery department and there's a really nice guy there who says, [Sweet raspy bakery man's voice] "Oh yes I know what you're talking about. They're in these purple boxes, yes. But, hon, we can't sell them yet. We can't sell them till the first week of February." And I plead, "But, it's already Mardi Gras season technically and I'm from Louisiana and I'm just craving one and I'm actually doing a podcast" - you know I'm so

important. I'm doing a podcast like everyone else- "I'm doing a podcast and it's for a prop for my podcast album." And, I must sound like the most crazy entitled person, ever. But, then again, if he works at Whole Foods, he's probably very used to dealing with crazy entitled people. Just sayin' !!!

It must be my desperation that makes him say, [Sweet raspy bakery man voice, this time Brooke gives him a New Jersey accent] "Look you didn't hear this from me but call back and ask to speak to the store manager. Tell her you heard through the grapevine that we have king cakes in the back and ask her if she'll let us make up a barcode to scan and sell you one." Again, that's my horrible New Jersey accent. So, I call the manager and she's willing to do that and I tell her, "I'm coming now. Save one for me." And, she's probably like, "Who is this chick?"

So, Momma and I get in the Jeep at rush hour and it's starting to sleet outside but we don't care. We're on a mission. When we arrive at the bakery, they're waiting for us. The bakery manager hands it to me and I feel like I'm a mom who's flown across the globe to adopt my first child. I ask him if he's ever eaten one and he says, "Not yet." And I tell him it's like the equivalent to New York (or New Jersey, so as not to offend our friends in Newark Whole Foods) like their bagels or pizza (even though we know New York has better pizza and bagels than New Jersey. I'm sorry, guys. I'm sorry Danny. One of my best friends, he's from New Jersey. Boo, I'm sorry. I think it's the water or [New Jersey accent] water. In New Jersey they say [New Jersey accent] water.) But anyways...

Momma and I peek through the clear plastic of the purple box and we see something that rivals the beauty of the queen's jewels. I would even shed a tear if I wasn't currently dealing with some dry eye, Jennifer Anniston, I feel ya, guhl. And, now, we are on a mission to protect the king cake for two and a half days before our photo shoot because it is the prop. But, within two hours of me being without a King cake and worried and not knowing what to do, that I won't be able to get a king cake and oh my God I hate New Jersey. Ah. It's so sad. Life is horrible, I have my king cake photo shoot prop, I've made some new friends in New Jersey at the Whole Foods in Newark and I feel like I've hit the jackpot. And y'all as you can tell from the podcast album cover, the king cake is a beaut, Clark. And she tasted good too. John, Margaret, my boyfriend Harry and I dug in to that king cake after the shoot and then later we brought some home to Momma. And, much like sugar will do to you, it wasn't just enough. I started craving more king cake...

And lo and behold, about a week after the photo shoot, we receive a magical box from Counter Space BR (short for Baton Rouge) with a note inside from my cousin Breana. My cousin's good friend has a bakery back home Counter Space BR I'll give them a plug and they ship nationwide, well they shipped us a king cake. And you get to decorate it yourself.

The decorating was really fun. I think the most fun part was watching my Yankee boyfriend who was born in India and [Brooke kind of imitates her boyfriend Harry] "doesn't like sweets that much, sweetie. I don't like sweets, really" He comes over in the morning to have Community Coffee with Chicory cafe au lait and king cake. And he just

beasted. It isn't just a delicious sugary pastry and sugar high my cousin shipped us, it was home. Whoever said you can't fill an emotional void clearly has never been to South Louisiana.

So, like Vada Sultenfuss from "My Girl", after learning, reviewing and having not just a summer of growth and coming of age, but several decades to let my love of king cake age like a fine wine, I now have a new poem I'd like to share with y'all :

King Cake, you're the reason Cajun peeps don't get SAAD  
When I try to find you up North, it drives me mad.  
I didn't appreciate you until I moved away  
Because back home Fat Tuesday isn't just a day  
Mardi Gras is a feeling a vibe an all over good mood  
And King Cake you're the epitome of joy masquerading as food  
I used to shy away from you counting each carbohydrate  
But I'll miss out on life if I only worry about my weight  
Looking past the gluten and sugar, you're a taste of home  
Basking in your glory, now I see you're more iconic than the French Quarter, Audubon Zoo or Superdome  
You're truly a legend and I'll miss you I fear  
But I know like Santa Claus, you'll be back this time next year.

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](http://BrookeHoover.com/fluffybuttproductions) or email me at [contactbrookehoover@gmail.com](mailto:contactbrookehoover@gmail.com) for more information. And, let's follow each other on instagram - I'm @Br00keH00ver and those 0'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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