**HFNT #16: Sampler Platter**

**Episode Transcript**

[INTRO MUSIC]

Scott: Happy Friday, North Texas. I'm Scott.

Alicia: And I'm Alicia.

Scott: Today is Friday, January 3rd. Except it's not for us, because we're still on winter break.

Alicia: Yes, but we didn't want to leave our UNT fam with nothing to listen to. So, welcome to our first ever best of episode. Today we are resharing Scott's interview with Cara Santa Maria from Episode One. My interview with about bee boxes from Episode Two and our tag team interview with the Eagle Ambassadors from Episode Nine.

Scott: That sounds like a perfect sampler platter of “Happy Friday, North Texas.” This is the perfect content for any new listeners we might have picked up in the new year.

Alicia: It sure is, Scotty. But before we can get to all that, we have to catch up.

Scott: Alicia, we don't have anything to catch up about. We just recorded the last episode.

Alicia: Don't spoil the illusion for our listeners, man. They haven't heard from us in two weeks.

Scott: What are we supposed to talk about then?

Alicia: Well, it's the perfect opportunity to remind our listeners that the bowl game is today. UNT versus Texas State at 3 p.m. If you're not heading to Dallas for the game, be sure to watch on ESPN.

Scott: That's right. GMG, baby! Let's start 2025 off with a big W.

Alicia: Let's go! And while we wait to find out those game results, let's kick off 2025 with some of our favorite interviews from 2024. Scott, what was your favorite interview last year?

Scott: Well, there were a lot of segments I'm really proud of. All of the “Democracy Primer” series and the Eagles Abroad interviews. But for my absolute favorite, I'm going all the way back to Episode One and my interview with Cara Santa Maria. I was a fan of Cara's for years before I even knew she was a UNT alum. And during one random podcast episode of hers, she mentioned she did her undergrad at UNT and I was like, “No way!”

Alicia: That's awesome. We love a good surprise.

Scott: So, when the idea for this podcast started to form, I went to her website and filled out the contact form just kind of on a whim, not really expecting anything to come of it. The next week, her assistant emailed me saying she'd love to be on the podcast and I couldn't believe it. That just made the whole thing really real to me. Like, this is someone I really look up to and respect who's been a professional podcaster for ten years. So that was a little intimidating, but it all came together.

[TRANSITION MUSIC}

Scott: Cara, thank you so much for joining me today. I appreciate you taking the time out of your schedule.

Cara: Absolutely.

Scott: So, we're launching this podcast for UNT and obviously you've been doing this for a while now. You've got some some big podcasting milestones coming up this year. So, ten years in, I want to ask what initially … obviously, podcasting is a pretty different environment today than it was ten years ago. Back then, how did you get into podcasting? What, what made you want to give this a try?

Cara: Yeah, I mean, my sort of origin story with podcasting is a little bit random. So, I started “Talk Nerdy” in 2014. I joined “The Skeptics Guide” about a year later. So, I've been doing, I had already been podcasting for about a year when they asked me to join them. So, when I first got into doing “Talk Nerdy,” it was kind of born out of some struggle, I guess you could say. At the time, my main sort of source of income, my career, as it were, was television. So, I had, you know, I got my both my undergrad and my master's degree from UNT. I did psychology for my undergrad and biology with a neuroscience concentration. So, it was in the biology department for my master's. And then I, just through a lot of random luck, ended up working in kind of public science communication on television. And I was working on a TV show at the time, which was pretty grueling. It was like a live, daily show. It had a pretty intense schedule. And, unfortunately, although I learned a lot on that show and I made a million friends for life and I had a wonderful time in many aspects, some aspects of the show were incredibly psychologically damaging, namely that the executive producer, sort of the person in charge of the show, was just like deeply, deeply sexist. And it was … yeah, it was great. It was a very, very contentious set. And, because I was a co-host, it was myself and another, and a man were the co-hosts of the show and co-producers. It was just like not an egalitarian experience at all. There was a lot of gaslighting, a lot of therapy involved. So, anyway, I'm on the show. It's really, really getting to me. And randomly, during that time, I was invited to be a guest on Joe Rogan's podcast and we were talking offline. Or actually, this might have happened on air in this episode, and he was like, “You should start a podcast. Like, it's actually really, it's a really good experience for those of us who have struggled with working sort of in the TV scene and not having a lot of kind of empowerment.” So, so, basically Joe's like, “Hey, if you start your own podcast, you're your own producer, you choose the content, you choose what you talk about, you choose who you interview, and it can be really empowering when in these other aspects of your career you're very disempowered.” And, I was like, “Nobody's going to listen to a show.” But because we were on air and because it was the Joe Rogan podcast, which just to be clear, was very, very different ten years ago, right? He said to like the listeners, “Hey, would you listen? Tell her you'll listen.” And so, of course I got this outpouring of incredible support across social media. And I was like, you know, “I'll try. I'll see how it goes.” I kind of put together my first few episodes. He was one of my earliest guests. And, yeah, people listened. So, I was very lucky that I started at a time and around people who could kind of support me during my beginning experience in podcasting, because I had no idea what I was doing. And honestly, I don't think the show got good … I mean, I don't even know if it's good now, but I don't think it got better for like years. It takes a while on your podcast to figure out how to do it.

Scott: Interesting. So, you mentioned that that first year or so was a lot of learning about the medium. What were some of those challenges you faced when getting started?

Cara: Well, one of the challenges that I didn't face, which is the opposite of the challenge that almost everybody who starts in podcasting faces, is listenership. I started with listenership because of that experience. And so, my challenge was actually in some ways inverse to most. It was that I started with a ton of people listening, and then there was a drop off, which is pretty typical and common. So, you think about it, like a big chunk of Joe Rogan's listenership listened to my first several episodes and then the ones who resonated with my content stayed around and the ones for whom I just wasn't the right fit for them dropped off. So, one of my first challenges was figuring out where I was going to net out because I started strong and weakened, whereas most shows start super weak and then they have to kind of build authentically from there. So, that's one thing that was kind of different about my show, but in terms of the kind of kind of classic challenges that most podcasters face, it's all the same stuff. Like, “What equipment do I use? I don't know anything about edit, audio editing. I don't understand this medium at all. How do you actually launch a show on the back end? Who's the hosting provider that I'm going to use?” It's technical, right? “What's an RSS feed and how do I make this work?” And so, reading a lot of articles, talking to a lot of people who are in the podcasting world, making big mistakes and learning from them. And then, also just, you know, I was lucky enough that I'd worked in television. So I think I already had some kind of interview skills under my belt. But just navigating what's a good show, what do people want to hear? And, probably most importantly, that push and pull between how do I sort of present something that is pleasing to my audience versus how do I create something that is important and authentic to me. And I think ultimately, I netted out much more on the latter than the former. I'm OK with the fact that my show is somewhat specific and that a certain type of person is going to listen to my show is not going to be appealing to everybody. But, the truth of the matter is, I like to work smart, not hard. I don't want to … I've been doing this ten years. I don't want this to be a pain point for me. I want to do what I want to do. And I'm just lucky enough that a handful of people have come along for the ride.

Scott: Yeah, that's awesome. And you mentioned still learning. You know, what are some of the challenges you still deal with today? I mean, imagine just having recently a Ph.D., just scheduling can be probably a pretty big challenge.

Cara: Yeah. I mean, time management is horrible. I'm quite lucky in the scheduling department because since I've been doing it for ten years, a few years and I started working with an assistant. It was that, once I was making enough money, and that's not like a lot of money, but once I was making enough money to take some things off my plate, I was able to hire somebody to, to help with that. So, I work with a wonderful woman. I've been working with her for many years now in a lot of different aspects of my media career named Noelle. And she is just, she's made it so that I can't function without her. So, she keeps my calendar on all of my media appearances. She interfaces with my agent, which is separate from podcasting. He doesn't do anything with podcasting, but in like, the TV world. She also helps me balance my time, makes sure that I take care of myself. You know, obviously schedules all my interviews. She also does some of the back-end work for me now on the podcast and does a lot of interfacing with different kind of publicists and editors at the different publishing houses, because very often I'm working with authors, and so she interfaces with them on their pitches and things like that. So, that's been hugely helpful. But, yeah, it's mostly just balance. You know, my calendar is color-coded, it looks bananas. I've got, you know, I just finished my Ph.D., like you said, in clinical psychology. So, it's like I've got my patients. So, I've got my psychology work over here. I've got my I haven't done TV since pre-COVID when everything sort of crashed. But I've got my media stuff over there, appearances, interviews, things like that. I've got my podcasting, I've got anything personal. So, they're all different color codes and she's very good at keeping all of that stuff straight, which is super helpful. I would say in terms of one of the biggest challenges now, it's growth I guess you could say. I think I have gotten a little bit lazy about just saying, “Well, good is good enough for me,” but I struggle with when I do talk to professionals in the field, especially hosting professionals, booking professionals, ad executives, and I'm like, “Well, what's your advice?” You know, because everybody knows, or maybe everybody doesn't know, but most people know that if you want to grow an audience, you need to go where the podcast listeners are. So, if I want more listeners of my show, I need to be a guest on other shows, right? It doesn't make sense to be a guest on a television show and talk about my podcast because there's no guarantee the people who watch that TV show even listen to podcasts. But if I go on other podcasters’ shows, then it's as simple as, you know, subscribe or download. So, that's really important. But the number one piece of advice I usually get is, “You just need more famous people on your show.” And I'm like, “That's not what `Talk Nerdy’ is like though.’” Like, the whole point of “Talk Nerdy” is that I interview, like, intelligent people about fascinating topics. It started in the hard sciences, and I still would say at least 70 percent of my guests are hard scientists or hard-science writers. But it's broadened into more, like, social justice issues as I've continued on my journey in psychology. But, you know, it's not about celebrities. It's not about, that's not what my show is. So, that's sometimes frustrating. And then, I'd say the last thing … sorry, I'm just rambling, is that when I ad sales have just been like abysmal for the past few years, and you've probably noticed this across podcasts. You know, even the really, really, really big shows, they just have a hard time selling enough ad space. Used to be I'd have to turn advertisers down. You know, I only wanted to do, let's say, two mid-roles per episode because I don't want to annoy the listeners. But that's how you fund your podcast is … There's, there's different avenues. But most people funded by selling ad space and by maybe doing something like Patreon, like a subscriber model. I heavily rely on Patron because I'm lucky if I sell like one ad every three weeks now, and it's just a different landscape than it used to be. So, monetizing is a little bit more difficult now than it used to be.

Scott: You know, so you mentioned starting with like a large listenership and that kind of like, winnowing down a little bit and then starting to make enough money where you could, like hire help, which is huge. At what point do you think it kind of hit you that like this could be more than just a side project? This could be like something that, like, really has some legs.

Cara: It's funny because I still think of it as a side project. Like it's, but I think it's partially because I am in a very privileged position, mostly due to my work, that I live in Los Angeles. So, like even though my podcasts are lucrative compared to, I would say like the national … Well, they're definitely lucrative compared to the typical podcast, but even compared to like median income, I do well financially podcasting, which is, I know, very rare, in a very privileged position. But living in Los Angeles, it's still not enough. I couldn't support myself wholly on podcasting. And so, because of that, I always have thought of it as like a secondary or a side gig. But you know what's interesting is that about a year and a half ago, when I moved from Los Angeles to Florida to complete the internship portion of my Ph.D. … Long story short, anybody who gets a doctorate in clinical psychology, so, you know, doing psychotherapy like seeing patients, you have to do what's called, like, an APA-accredited, yearlong internship. It's your final year of your Ph.D. or your PsyD, and it's a 2,000-hour internship where you're usually finishing her dissertation at the same time, but you're also working basically full time as an unlicensed, not-quite-psychologist psychologist. And so, and it's a match program, just like medical residency. So, oftentimes people move for it. So, I moved to Florida and did my internship in a clinic, like a gerontology, like an older adult care clinic in South Florida. And it paid nothing. I mean, it technically paid me money, but I don't even think I was making minimum wage. Like, it's crazy how little they're able to get away with paying interns. And so, but I couldn't do anything else. I couldn't take a TV job. I didn't have time. I was working full time. So, I continued podcasting. You know, I've never had a break in my podcasting. I've continued through all of this. And that's when it became really obvious to me that it is more than a side gig, because for the last year and a half, it's actually been my main source of income. It has not been my main time suck, like, definitely the clinical work, you know, like I said, it was full time. It was 40 hours a week. Podcasting, I'd say, I spend less than 10 hours a week doing between two podcasts, sometimes three. So, it's definitely a, but that's just because I've been doing it for so long. And again, work smart, not hard has always been my mantra. I couldn't balance it if I didn't have it super streamlined. But yeah, that's when I sort of realized, “I'm kind of supporting myself right now on this podcasting thing.” If I didn't have this, I would really be chipping away or I would have needed a lot of savings or taken out really big loans or something like that, because I just wouldn't have been able to afford to support myself on a on an intern’s salary.

Scott: You talked about the time break down and being able to streamline things. And I know you mentioned, you know, color coding the calendar and having help with like coordinating bookings and all that. Are there any other, you know, time management tricks or tips that that you've found that have worked particularly well for you?

Cara: Yeah. I mean, one of them is, again, just a point of privilege. Like, I pay an editor now, You know, like back in the day, I edited my own show. For years, I edited my own show, which, A, is dumb because I'm not good at it. And, B, takes a ton of time, you know. And, it's sort of like, it's sort of like that thing you learn as you become an adult. Like, I own my own home now. I mean, I just turned 40, so, but I have owned my own home for several years. And, you know, I could fix the toilet myself, but I might do it wrong and it might break again. And it'll take three times longer, maybe ten times longer, or I could just hire a professional who has all the right tools, who does this for a living and who I know is going to do it correctly. And that's sort of how I feel about podcast editing. So, once I was able to … first I got an assistant because I was losing it and I really just needed help with that. And then, once I was able to afford to, and these back in the day with Patreon, you used to set these different goals and things like that. My next big goal was to hire an editor, and so that's been a huge part of time management. Otherwise, I would say, you know, think about the outcome, think about what the finished product, what you want it to look like and sound like. For me, I wanted it to feel really natural. I didn't want an overly produced show and I wanted an interview show. And part of the reason that those were my goals is because I knew I would not have the time to dedicate to a lot of pre-production. I knew that I needed to be able to just walk right into an episode and it be really flowing, like it just worked, you know, be really natural. I also wanted to lean into my talents and move away from things that were Sisyphean for me. I know that this is something that I've been, like, a skill that I've been honing over the years is my interview skills. So, that's what I wanted to lean into. So, you know, thinking about what makes me unique, what is my point of view, what are the things that come a little bit easier for me if I lean into those and then I sort of move away from the things that are just going to be burdensome and feel like a ton of work without a lot of benefit. That has really helped me over the years to come up with a show that makes sense for me. And it's helped with time management hugely.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: That was so good and I love listening back to it knowing how geeked-out you were for the interview. You did very good, Scootle. Proud co-host moment.

Scott: Thanks, Alicia. Your turn: What was your favorite segment of 2024?

Alicia: The bee boxes, baby. This was back on Episode Two when I interviewed a group of students setting up bee boxes on campus. It was my first interview for the pod. And, you know I love getting the chance to talk to students, especially when the topic is something they're passionate about.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Ethan: Hello, I'm Ethan Phillips. I am an ecology major and I'm also the vice chair of the We Mean Green Fund.

Tristen: My name is Tristen Wheeler. I'm the associate director of the Diamond Eagle Student Resource Center, which includes the Bee Campus Committee. So, I'm one of the advisors for the Bee Campus Committee.

Bree: My name is Bree. I am a psychology major and I am the chair of the UNT Bee Campus Committee.

Caitlin: Hi, I am Caitlin and I'm the Secretary for Bee Campus.

Ben: My name is Ben Copeland. I'm an ecology senior and, together with Bree and Caitlin, authored the grant to make this possible.

Alicia: So, can you give us some background on what this is and how it came about?

Ethan: Of course. So, the background of the Bee Boxes project and how it came about. So, it started off as a concept in 2021, as I was volunteering at the Pollinative Prairie next to Discovery Park, and I was helping install several bee boxes at the Pollinative Prairie. I didn't know what they were, so I did some research on them and I got super enthralled by them. And so, I did more research. And then, at the same time I was on the We Mean Green Fund, and so I used the We Mean Green Fund Committee knowledge to create a project, propose it to the committee. And then, I got funding for it. And so, recently, I've been able to put it on campus, but I started the project back in 2021.

Alicia: And why is this so important? What will the benefit be for campus?

Ben: Yeah, so a big thing, just like ecologically speaking, is supporting nativity, right? Like, when people think of bees, we think of European honeybees, and most people don't know that they're invasive. They are what is known as generalists. So, they'll just swoop in an area, take up all the resources and mess with whatever native populations are there. So, this project specifically is supposed birding native species because they're more adapted to helping out native plants, and that just goes up the line to just a more-healthy ecosystem.

Alicia: So where will this be located?

Ben: Yeah, we're working on really building on Ethan's work. We're going to be doing it here at the library wall. Our football stadium, DATCU Stadium, we've got one installed there. There will be another. And we have a little pocket prairie, a little biodiversity hotspot here on campus, the parking lot prairie, thro a box there. And then, we're going to support some of the work that's already going on there at the Pollinator Prairie, which is like an awesome biodiversity hotspot. We're going to have one there as well. Also, the Environmental Science building as well.

Alicia: What research are you hoping to gain from this?

Ethan: So, a big thing about learning about native bees are about the risks and the threats that they face. So, my research is looking at the validity of bee boxes. So, do bees actually use them, and to what extent do they use them? So, what kind of native bee species preferred this location versus, you know, the other locations. Or what kind of parasites might be encountered while putting up the bee boxes or if any of them get infected by fungi.

So, Chalkbrood is a big example of a fungal infection that is known to kill native solitary bees. So, I'm trying to look into how many bees use it. If they're using it properly, if they're using it successfully, or if they are, I guess, suffering from mortality because of Chalkbrood or parasites or other environmental pressures.

Alicia: Do you have outside funding for this effort?

Caitlin: So, the primary funding for this project comes from the UNT We Mean Green Fund. It's a $5 environmental service fee that every student pays into. And we have a student-led committee who determines the allocation of that funding. And so, currently all of all of our funding is from the We Mean Green Fund and we don't have external from you anti funding.

Alicia: So, people hear bees and immediately feel a certain way. Why is there nothing to fear with these boxes?

Tristen: So, the reputation that bees have is totally understandable from a lot of people whose only experience with bees and their concept of bees is the honey bees. Honey bees are a group species and they have a queen, they have a hive, and so they have a very strong evolutionary drive to protect their hive. And this is what gives them a more aggressive and territorial reputation. However, the native bees species that we are supporting with this initiative, with these boxes, they are solitary species. So, that means that they do not have this same evolutionary drive to protect a queen or even their hive. They are much more likely to fly away, to leave a space, and they are also not the type to sting in retaliation. And they actually are usually a lot smaller than honey bees, too. So, you're pretty likely to not even realize that you have seen one of these native bees. So, we're really hoping to increase education about native bees here, and we would love to change your concept of what a bee is.

Alicia: So now for a fun question: Why do wasps have bad PR?

Ethan: Wasps get so much unnecessary hate. And it's understandable from the same reason that that Bree mentioned where sometimes we have perceptions of things and it's sometimes rooted in one aspect. But as you learn more and more about wasps, you realize how broad of a category it is. And, with wasps especially, there are a lot that are not super aggressive and a lot that are extremely docile. And there are ones that are even pollinators as well. And so, wasps tend to get the short end of the stick because people see them and they typically expect a bad reaction with their sting when in reality they're just defending themselves at the very last-possible second. It's a last resort, and most of the time they're not doing it because they want to. They're doing it because they have to. And, there's a lot of other wasp species out there that a lot of people aren't aware of, like fairy wasps and ichneumonids and a bunch of other wasp that do a bunch of different things in the environment. So, there's more than just wasp that sting people. There's wasps that pollinate, there's wasp that parasitized. There are wasps that do a bunch of different stuff. There are solitary wasps, there is communal wasps. There's a lot of different varieties. Same with bees.

Alicia: Is there anything else you'd like us to know?

Ben: If your house has a lawn, you should kill it. Grab native seeds, throw them out, stop mowing. Let the wild take over your lawn. Do it. The world will be better.

Ethan: I'm also going to have to agree with them. Native vegetation is the best way to support native wildlife. These animals and these creatures and even these plants have evolved for millions of years to benefit from each other. And by taking away that relationship and disrupting it, you're causing a lot more environmental harm than you are doing for good.

Tristen: We also have a lot of opportunities and will be having more opportunities for students to get involved in this. And so looking into you and UNT’s Bee Campus USA that will give opportunities for students to volunteer and get involved in the actual planting and maintaining of native plants and potentially further opportunities moving forward as we keep expanding our native pollinator support here on campus.

Caitlin: So, yes, the Campus USA is part of The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation and UNT was actually the first school in Texas to adopt this kind of certification and we've kept it since then. We also have led a lot of other, we've led ahead a lot of other universities in Texas on these kinds of initiatives supporting native bees. So yes, really cool. Get involved. Learn more about beecampusUSA@unt.edu.

Alicia: Thank you for that plug. And thank y’all for everything.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: Loved that one, Alicia. And it was our first interview with a group of students, which also became one of our favorite things to do on the show.

Alicia: Yes, like when Christiana interviewed members of the Green Brigade in Episode Eight, or when Amanda talked to the students from Mean Green Racing in Episode 15.

Scott: And don't forget our next interview, from last year, when you and I talked to a few Eagle Ambassadors in Episode Nine.

Alicia: That's right. Our Eagle ambassadors are true UNT experts brimming with Mean Green pride, and they spilled the tea on how students can live their best lives on campus.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Delaney: My name is Delaney. I am a history and political science major and I'm also a senior.

Sanji: Hi, my name is Sanji. My major is computer science and I am a sophomore.

Herschel: Hi, my name is Herschel. I'm currently a junior here at UNT, majoring in computer science with a minor in cybersecurity and mathematics. Really, the tech guy. And, yeah, it's been three years since I'm here at UNT.

Alicia: Awesome. Today our focus will be on our “UNT 101” series where we ask our Eagle Ambassadors some questions about their favorite spots in Denton and on campus, and much more, encouraging students to explore these recommendations. So, let's get started.

Scott: All right. So, we're going to start with ways to get involved on campus. So, with the many resources, programs and student orgs we have at UNT, what are some of your favorite ways to get involved on campus?

Delaney: Personally, I took a lot of advantage of the on-campus housing and the resources that. Your R.A. will set up weekly meetings or monthly meetings, depending on where you are in your semester. Also, there are dorm-exclusive events that you can host. My dorm did a Halloween event, which was really fun. They also did a first-week-of-school event. Stuff like that really helped me meet my friends on campus.

Sanji: So, I would say get involved in, like, the organizations. You know, you can become members of it, or you can also attend the First Flight week. There's like a lot going on during the First Flight Week.

Herschel: I would say the best advice would I would give to the students if they wanted to get involved on campus … because I was an orientation leader last year, so I was responsible for the students to tell the resources how you can get involved. So, the first one is, I would say, there's a website which is called OrgSync UNT. You can search on the organization. Let's say, I'm a skinny guy, I love to climb. So, if you can, you know, you love climbing and stuff, you can search and join the Climbing Club. And I would say find your passion. As a student, we're all passionate about something. I'm really passionate about my field, tech field. So, I'm a part of like educational organizations on campus as well. So, I would say, just find your passion, which organization you are interested and joining it, make new friends and try to get involved on campus as much as you can. And that's the best advice I would give to the students.

Alicia: The next question I have is about your favorite UNT trivia or history. UNT was established in 1890 and has 134 years of history, trivia and general quirkiness to draw from. What are some of your favorite UNT trivia or history?

Delaney: Yeah, a fun fact that I learned recently is that we actually got to vote on our mascot, Scrappy. Some of the runner ups, instead of being an eagle, were a dragon. So, we could have been the UNT Dragons.

Alicia: That's funny.

Sanji: So, my favorite history is the homecoming bonfire. Like, there are fireworks. There are people. There's one fire. I love it all.

Scott: Yeah, that's super fun tradition.

Herschel: Well, I would say my favorite UNT history tradition would be the Eagle claw and call and the alma mater song. So, I used to sing a lot of the time when I was in the orientation. And we also used the Eagle claw and call throughout our tours. So, we are standing in front of the Hurley Administration Building, we're teaching how to do an Eagle claw, so I think it's one of the most memorable UNT history, which I really like doing it, and the guests are having a great time with doing Eagle claw and call. So, it's pretty fun.

Scott: You’ve got to give us a caw now.

Herschel: I can do, I can do an Eagle caw, so I'll be as loud as possible.

Alicia: Go for it.

Herschel: CAW!

Alicia: Yeah! That's awesome.

Scott: All right, next up, we’ve got coffee. For college students, coffee is very important. From time to time, you need that caffeine boost to get through those long days of studying or just need an afternoon treat. Which Denton coffee shops would you recommend to your fellow peers?

Delaney: Yeah. Personally, I'm a huge fan of West Oak. It's just on the square, but the best part about West Oak is their Voltage coffee, which we serve on campus. So, when I'm too lazy to go walk or drive over to the square, I just go to the one right by my job and right by my classes and get that good Voltage coffee straight from UNT.

Scott: Nice.

Sanji: Yeah. My favorite is West Oak store coffee bar too, in Denton Square. I love their coffee.

Herschel: Well, I would say, to be honest, I'm not a coffee person. I really like tea and I enjoy drinking tea every single day, whenever I think of. But, I would say I have heard great things about Froth Coffee Bar and West Oak Coffee Bar as well. So, I would say that could be my recommendation if you are looking forward to visit one of the top coffee spots in Denton.

Scott: Anywhere you go to get tea?

Herschel: Tea? I like to make my own tea at my apartment. So I would say, you know, self- caring is the most. I would say whenever you cook your home-cooked meal, that tastes a lot better than, you know, going outside eating. So, I would say I cook my own tea. I'm going to tell you, I like to, you know, make my own tea. So, I love that.

Delaney: Yeah, if you have a chance, Aura, which is also just off campus, does a great chai.

Herschel: Really?

Yeah, I would definitely, you know.

Delaney: I recommend. We can go together.

Alicia: There's another spot. I can't think of it. It's also on the square. It's next to West Oak.

Delaney: So, yes, it's red in color.

Alicia: Yes. That has a great dirty chai.

Delaney: Yes. They also … not that, if we can't remember the name is not important, but they do a chocolate-dipped-strawberry mocha. Yeah, it's very gourmet. We were just talking about this, too. What is it called?

Sanji: Jupiter?

Delaney: Jupiter House! Great smoothies, great coffee. And that strawberry-dipped chocolate mocha. Amazing!

Herschel: But I would say, we have two Starbucks on campus. One is outside, which is kind of like right next to the Hurley Administration Building. One is inside the university. And then, my favorite drink is Mocha Cookie Crumble. So, if you are looking to try a new drink at Starbucks, definitely I would say you can try that.

Alicia: Good recommendations. All right. Next up, we're going to talk about music venues. Denton seems to be the hub of some live music. Whether you want to go to a concert, an intimate show or a street performance, there are plenty of places to take in some tunes. In your own humble opinion, what are some of the best music venues in Denton?

Delaney: I'm very opinionated about this. Every fall we do a jazz festival. If you haven't visited, I do recommend it and it takes place in Denton's Quakertown Park. They put up multiple stages, both for local bands and for UNT bands. I went last year with a group of my friends and we were there the whole night. It was a great time as a whole. It’s also a perfect time of year, usually October-ish, where it's nice and not too chilly to be outside. They have great food, great music, all the good stuff for a good night with friends.

Sanji: My favorite is The Syndicate. They have, like, beautiful music playing in there. It's, like, good background music. It doesn't disturb even while you're studying, at least for me.

Alicia: Yeah, definitely. I could agree.

Herschel: Well, I would say the best music venues. I have not been to, actually, like different spots on Denton to, you know, spot like wonderful music. But I've seen a lot of events in Denton Square. They have a lot of community fairs as well. But I would say if you want to listen to really good music, I really like attending the tailgate and the marching band, how they perform those, you know, all that kind of stuff. And one of my coworkers, he was a part of the Mean Green Brigade and he was the one who was doing this, I believe. What do you call that, Delaney?

Delaney: Conducting.

Herschel: Conducting, exactly. So, I would say I really love watching our band perform that music before the football game starts and I think it's one of the most different feelings you can get before the football game starts.

Delaney: Yeah, and on that note, another fun fact about UNT, our 1 O’Clock Jazz Band is the only collegiate band to have received Grammy nominations. So not only is it really convenient, but it's really quality.

Herschel: And I guess they have been nominated seven times.

Delaney: I believe seven. Yeah, maybe the eighth time we'll finally get that Grammy and we'll put it in The Syndicate.

Scott: All right. So, now we're going into food.

Alicia: My favorite.

Scott: Denton is becoming foodie central with its variety of eclectic and well-rounded dining options, reflective of its quirky personality. What are some of your favorite places to eat off of campus?

Delaney: Yes, speaking of a quirky personality, Graffiti Pasta is one of my favorite places to visit is on the square. And graffiti is not just a name, it's also the setting. So, they have local artists completely slathered across the walls, on the tables, on the chairs. Also, I do have some dietary issues, so going there, they always are really good at accommodating that and they have a music venue downstairs as well.

Saji: My favorite has to be Crooked Crust Pizza, and for Mexican food, I love Rusty Taco. It's in the Denton square.

Alicia: Solid choice.

Herschel: Well, for me, I would say I'm a huge fan of sandwiches and I love subs. So, there's a place by Eagle Drive which just called New York Sub Hub, which is really a fantastic place. It is, I would say, one of my top spots. You know, if I feel hungry after my classes, I'll definitely go by Eagle Drive on my sub, go back to my classes again.

Alicia: OK. Onto the next question. Still on food. Between our dining halls and retail options, there's no shortage of choices when it comes to grabbing a bite to eat on campus. We literally have an all-vegan dining hall. What are some of your favorite places to eat on campus?

Delaney: Yeah, I really like Bruce Hall. What's unique about Bruce Hall is they have a different menu every day now. They are known for the 300 pounds of mac and cheese that they make no matter what. But for the weekly menu, on Thursdays they do chicken Katsu, which is like a fried Korean chicken. It's so good. I literally gorge myself on it every Thursday. I do recommend.

Sanji: My favorite food on campus has to be Eagle Landing. I mean, they don't have different menu every day or anything, but I love their food so much.

Scott: Yeah, it's good. Like, food-court style. You can get whatever you want. I like that.

Herschel: But I'll tell you, if you were to ask me this question during midnight, I would definitely say Eagle Landing without any doubt, because it has seven different restaurants and I really like their Asian fried rice. And, the second thing which I really like, is about the burger, the options they have. The falafel, they have chicken and all that kind of stuff. So, I would say if you are looking forward to, you know, try a variety of stuff in your diet, Eagle Landing is definitely the place. And you can actually tell your mom, “Hey, Mom, I just gained 10 pounds this weekend by eating at Eagle Landing.” They have really good desserts and stuff. And if you're a really good fan of brownies, absolutely you’ve got to try the Clark Bakery, which is right next to the Cibo Fresco. I love that place.

[TRANSITION MUSIC}

Alicia: That was such a fun interview and it was so great to get them all in the studio to record together. So, this is where we’d usually do our Q&A segment, but since we're on vacation, we're skipping that this week. But, dearest listeners, if you have any questions you'd like to hear us answer in 2025, please email us at podcast@unt.edu or call us at 940-565-4341.

Scott: And make it a resolution to tell a friend about the show, share it on social media or leave us a rating and review wherever you listen. Until next, time we hope you have a Happy Friday, North Texas.

Alicia: And, Go Mean Green.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: “Happy Friday, North Texas” is a production of the University of North Texas. Today’s show was produced by Scott Brown with original reporting by Scott Brown and Alicia Zartman. For more information visit unt.edu/podcast.

Scott: Happy Friday, North Texas. I'm Scott.

Alicia: And I'm Alicia.

Scott: What happened?

Alicia: I yawned. I'm sorry. You can see in the video I’m like … My bad. OK, let's start that over.

Scott: Yeah, so when the idea for this pardcast …

Alicia: This pardcast ...

Scott: I have the silent laugh.

Alicia: Hey y'all, welcome to pardcast. Ok I'll go get you out of that. I love the store. All right.

Scott: That just made the whole thing really real to me. Like, this is someone I really Look, look, love. When start.

Alicia: That was so good, and I loved listening back to it. No, I didn't know.

Scott: Growl.

Alicia: That's right. Our Eagle Ambassadors are true UNT experts brimming from the Mean Green pride. What?

Scott: With the Mean Green pride.

Alicia: With the. From the. All of the. Oh my God, it's me. Oh, my God. And I'm like, `It's.’ OK, I'm ready. But dearest listeners, if you have any questions you'd like to hear from us in 2025. I need to redo that. I’m still going to do it. I just need to like.

Scott: You went into a dramatic reading.

Alicia: I individuated but various listeners I'm Lady Whistledown. But dearest listeners. This is Happy Friday, North Texas.

Alicia: OK, I'm done. So, this is and so good. I make noises.

Scott: I don't think so. Like during that last part. I don't think so.

Alicia: OK.

Scott: Do you think you were making noises?

Alicia: Moves. If you didn't hear it, I think we’re OK.