

**EPISODE 266**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:19] AVH:** Hey everybody, this is Ashleigh. You're listening to Paleo Magazine Radio and question of the day, who is in the mood for bacon? I'm kidding, that's a trick question. Obviously, if you're listening to Paleo Magazine Radio, you're in the mood for bacon. But the question is relevant because today, I'm speaking with Lisa Caras, she is the Director of Traditional Retail Sales and Marketing for Jones Dairy farm, She is a 7<sup>th</sup> generation, member of the family and the company. This is a family owned business, it's based in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, they're celebrating 130 years in existence this year.

They know what they're doing and the company, the farm, they're best known for all natural sausage, dry aged, center cut bacon and naturally smoked ham and Canadian bacon. Those of us in Canada, we just call Canadian Bacon, bacon. No, I'm kidding, we actually call it Canadian Bacon, or ham I guess.

The company, Jones Dairy Farm, they are really well known for these sausages that they make, they're small batch, they obviously use local, really good quality, high end meat, they don't use infers, fillers, gluten or preservatives and I mean, they sent me some stuff to try. I'm a breakfast person to begin with, I will eat breakfast food for every meal.

Bacon and eggs and sausage is basically something I could eat every day for the rest of my life, happily. I was into it and I love their products, they're fantastic, they have a special section on their website that's dedicated to just paleo friendly products and you might ask like, well, isn't meat just always paleo?

But bacon and sausages aren't always the case, right? They have preservatives and fillers and sugar and things that made them not really technically paleo. These guys are catering to those of us who care about stuff like that. If you want to check out their website, we're going to put all that stuff in the show notes, you can check them out and try some of their delicious stuff.

But this chat is really just kind of learning about how farms really work, how you can still find success by staying true to your roots and being authentic and doing things in a kind of a smaller scale, healthier way, a way that's healthier for people and the planet and the animals, which is important.

Lisa also tells us how, their tricks on how to make bacon even more delicious because apparently, there are tricks and you can make bacon even more delicious. You want to stay tuned for that. I hope you enjoy the interview and here we are, my chat with Lisa from Jones Dairy Farm.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:02:45.1] AVH:** All right Lisa, welcome to the podcast. Thanks for being here.

**[0:02:47.9] LC:** Thanks so much Ashleigh, it's a pleasure to speak with you today.

**[0:02:51.2] AVH:** Awesome, I apologize in advance if I sound a little bit like I have a cold because I do. In month six of winter, I'm here in Ontario Canada and it's just like, I'm getting tired of complaining about it. Almost as tired of complaining about it as I am of the cold but I finally kind of – my immune system gave up and I have a cold today.

So I apologize from like a little sickly, I'll try not to be coughing an ear here but yeah, I appreciate you taking the time, I'd love for you, before we kind of get into any other questions to just kind of tell our listeners a little bit about who you are and your background and what you do.

**[0:03:26.8] LC:** Sure, I would love to. My name is Lisa Caras and I'm currently our marketing manager at Jones Dairy Farm. I grew up with the company. I am part of the 7<sup>th</sup> generation at Jones Dairy Farm, we're a family owned and operated company so I'm actually the only family member, part of the 7<sup>th</sup> generation at this time, so I'm super excited about that.

I joined Jones about a year and a half ago. Before that, my degree is in finance, I worked out at Silicon Valley for a couple of years and then I moved in New York City where I got my MBA and worked at a consultant. Kind of have a background more in the technology side, not at all in

manufacturing or meat or breakfast meats or anything like that. However, I did grow up on this farm, I grew up part of Jones Dairy Farm as an intern and I kind of always knew that I wanted to come back to the family company.

But it was really important for me to get experience outside of the company and learn from the best companies and get a great education and be able to come back with confidence and feel ready for it. It's really exciting to be part of it, be part of a legacy and part of a company that's 130 years old. It's been a lot to learn but it's been a lot of excitement along the way so far.

**[0:05:04.1] AVH:** That is very impressive, 130 years and you're saying, seventh generation and you're the only one from the original family that's currently working there, is that right?

**[0:05:13.5] LC:** Yeah, at this point, I am the only one in the 7<sup>th</sup> generation. There's still time, I'm kind of on the younger side. We could have a couple join later on so – but at this point, I'm really the only one. My step-dad, Philip Jones. He is the sixth generation family business owner. His great, great grandfather started the company back in like the 1800s. It's pretty cool.

**[0:05:41.3] AVH:** Yeah, that's really impressive. You said you went to school in New York City. That's a pretty big difference from growing up and hanging out on a farm.

**[0:05:50.7] LC:** My gosh, yes.

**[0:05:53.1] AVH:** Tell me about that? What made you know that you wanted to kind of be a part of the company and kind of have that sort of – not so much city and more country kind of lifestyle?

**[0:06:04.5] LC:** After I graduated high school, I knew I wanted to kind of get out of Wisconsin and experience as much different cultures and geographies and just get exposure to life outside of Wisconsin and that's exactly what I did. And so working for Intel out in California, I feel like I got like a great experience working for a huge corporate company and I learned from really kind of the best in the industry.

Then, moving to New York City, it was exactly like you said, it was kind of the emphasis for Wisconsin, with Atkinson which is where Jones Dairy Farm is located is 10,000 people. It's in the middle of Wisconsin like we are surrounded by corn fields and cows and exactly what you would imagine.

It was something where I just wanted that experience. I learned so much and I worked for IBM after I graduated from business school and again, got great learnings from the best in the industry. After living in New York City for three years, my husband and I, we started thinking about family and being closer to one of our families and where we wanted our next step to be and it was just kind of a quarter life crisis kind of thing.

Where we evaluated what we want in our lives and like I said, I always knew, I would come back to Jones, I just don't know when but it felt like that was really the right timing and I felt like I could bring some different skills and value to Jones and kind of what I'm doing. I'm really happy being back in Wisconsin and question my family and it's been really a great move so far.

**[0:07:55.0] AVH:** Well, it's definitely a range of experience you've had there in terms of places you've traveled and the places you worked, but I hear what you're saying, sometimes it's – well, I think for everybody, it's good to have different experiences and get out and see what you like and what you don't like is that helps you figure out what your plan for the future is, have a better idea of what you fit in and what you like.

**[0:08:16.1] LC:** Actually at NYU where I went to business school, I took a family business and in concentration. Have multiple family business classes and it was pretty cool where there was multiple classmates who were part of a family businesses and we really got to create kind of a cohort of experiences and share knowledge about each other's company.

Part of our bylaws for Jones state farm is that if you are to – want to join the company, you have to have at least five years of experience outside of the company if you're interested in working for the company. We really kind of pride ourselves on – you have to really earn working here and you kind of have to prove yourself and it's just not nepotism that would bring you to a company.

**[0:09:02.4] AVH:** That's really interesting, that's really unique. Okay, tell us a little bit more about Jones Dairy Farm and I know with some farm, it's been in operation for 130 years, that could probably be a long history, you don't have to give us every detail but go for a little bit of background and what the farm offers and why they're unique and we'll go from there.

**[0:09:22.5] LC:** Yeah, I would love to. As I mentioned, we were started in 1889 but really, the products which we still pride ourselves on today, our original sausage recipe was started even well before that, it was around 1850 or 1830. Milo Jones, he started the company in 1889 and it was based off the original scroll sausage recipe which is four ingredients, pork, salt, spices and water and it's still the same recipe that we use today.

Along the way, we've developed additional products to kind of compliment breakfast meats category. The bread and butter of our company is on sausage, that's – pork sausage, we've expanded into turkey sausage, chicken sausage both in the precooked version, that would be where you'd find those products in the freezer section and raw sausage where you'd find it in the refrigerated section.

But then we also focus on many other products such as ham and Canadian bacon, our bacon is the best ever. Clearly, We really have a wonderful bacon product.

**[0:10:39.4] AVH:** Can you – what's the difference between you said, precooked and raw. I'm assuming, you know, the difference?

**[0:10:45.4] LC:** Yeah, that's a great question. We have a precooked version which is essentially what you would heat up in like the microwave or heat up on the stove, it's already been cooked. It's really kind of for people who want more convenience, it's really quick and we actually freeze it because we never use any preservatives or MSG or fillers or binders or chemicals or anything.

Our only method for preservation is freezing it. That's kind of why it's in the frozen section. The raw version, it's kind of like what you would buy if you were to buy a ground beef or something to the store at WholeFoods. It's just kind of ready to cook right then. You can freeze it if you want but it's best eaten fresh.

**[0:11:37.2] AVH:** Then also, I've tried your products and obviously, you're kind of preaching to the choir with me because I'm like this breakfast meat lover, you're putting these sausages and bacon, I'm like, I'm sold already.

What makes your bacon especially delicious because I will say, I mean, it's good to have good quality products obviously and but no preservatives, no fillers, none of that stuff, obviously great. But I mean, bacon tastes delicious no matter what, let's be real. Pretty hard to mess up taste wise. What makes yours special?

**[0:12:12.9] LC:** I would love to share more about that. I think our bacon is really the best bacon ever and I say that for actually valid reasons. Starting off our raw product. We purchased center cut pork bellies. What that means is we pay more, we value higher quality pork bellies than a lot of other bacon producers, this is where you're getting the best lean and fat ratio of pork belly.

We're like cutting off the ends and so that's called the center cut. That piece is better bacon, it's better tasting, it has more lean parts and less fat, it's just kind of choosing the best cut of the pork belly that you can. That's really the foundation of it. The second part is, we do a natural smoke. What that means is, we have smoke houses that we're actually smoking for 12 hours over real wood chips. We use hickory wood chips and cherry wood chips, we never use any liquid smoke which most manufacturers use to kind of get that smoky flavor.

We get that naturally from just the different types of trees that we use. If we have kind of a cherry wood flavor, it's going to be a little bit sweeter. If we have the hickory which is a little bit smokier. We really – this is the way that we've been doing it for forever. We keep the integrity of producing these products the way that we've been doing it forever and that's, we feel that's the right way to do it. Then, the last part I want to talk about is the dry aging process.

We dry age our bacon which basically means, it's sitting and harnessing in all those flavors and developing kind of a robust and natural flavor, versus injecting flavors that a lot of other manufacturers do. That means that it takes longer for us to manufacture our bacon but we feel it makes the most amount of taste difference.

Between just kind of those couple of different manufacturing choices, we feel it provides the best product out there.

### [SPONSOR MESSAGE]

**[0:14:42.4] AVH:** Guys, I'm briefly interrupting this awesome episode to talk to you about our show sponsor today which is Just Thrive probiotic. You may remember them from Episode 263 where I speak with Tina Anderson and learn a ton of stuff about probiotics. I highly recommend you go back to that episode and check it out.

But these guys are doing big things in the probiotic world, their products have 100% survivability which means that the strains of their probiotics are so robust that they make it to your gut where they can actually do the work that they need to do.

If you've heard before about how your probiotics should be refrigerated and they have to be kept this way or that way to survive, that's kind of a sign, I learned of not a great probiotic because if something's not going to survive at room temperature, how do you think it's going to make it through your hot, gross guts to do the work that they're going to do. There's fact one for you.

The products are great for kids, you can just the capsules, the powder into a food or drink if you want to get your kids on the probiotics, they're really heavily researched, they've used human clinical trials, showing that the strains they use can reduce leaky gut, they've got current clinical trials ongoing so they're actually backing up what they're saying they can do.

They use really high quality products, it's obviously gluten free, dairy free, nut free, there's no sugar, salt, binders, anything gross like that, putting the probiotics together. These guys take their work seriously and I've been using it myself for a couple of months and it's been working out.

I mean, I don't want to give you too many gory details but my digestion is A plus right now. Anyway, they want to give you guys a discount, if you want to try out their probiotics, if you go to [thriveprobiotic.com](http://thriveprobiotic.com) and use the code `paleomag15`, you get 15% of your order.

It's worth a shot, they're great and that's it. Thanks guys.

[CONTINUED]

**[0:16:39.2] AVH:** You also talk about how in keeping with tradition of how you guys have made your sausage forever but you do it in small batches. I like the – talk about that a little bit more because that generally speaking, consumers think like okay, small batch is good, better quality but we maybe don't always know why.

And it's also a question when your company and I don't know exactly how big you guys are in terms of production or distribution or whatever but it is hard, I would imagine it is hard for a company that is selling products in stores across the country to still do things in small batches.

So can you talk about that?

**[0:17:15.0] LC:** Absolutely. So just to answer your distribution question, we are all over the country. We are in most retailers across the United States and we're also in about 15 different countries outside the US. So we are actually really big in Japan and Korea and Southeast Asia, which is pretty cool. And then kind of Central America and Canada. So yes small batch is again something that we feel is the right way to do it and the way that we have been doing it for a long time.

And it is a matter of product safety, so we feel that by doing it in small batches, it is best for making sure that you have the best meat. It sorts out things that you don't want in your sausage such as bones or anything like that. So it produces the best in the product. It also ensures that you are not overworking the meat and it fits with the I guess the character of our workforce. So we do multiple shifts and we have I guess people that like a one person can work one line. It just works with the structure of our manufacturing lines.

So the equipment can only manage a certain amount of product. So small batches is really important to us from a food safety perspective, from a logistics perspective and yeah, it just

goes down to the root of we are a small family owned company and we don't feel like we need to be the big commercial companies out there like you see. So it is our DNA.

**[0:18:51.7] AVH:** But you must be a very hard working small company because if you have that producing all of this stuff for people.

**[0:18:58.7] LC:** Yeah, I like to think so.

**[0:18:59.9] AVH:** Yeah, I mean so how many people are employed by Jones Dairy at this point?

**[0:19:06.0] LC:** It is less than 500.

**[0:19:09.5] AVH:** Yeah, so you got that working hard.

**[0:19:10.9] LC:** Yep.

**[0:19:11.9] AVH:** You also talk about one of the big selling points is that you are making these sausages without binders and fillers and gluten and preservatives and all of the things that are basically ubiquitous in breakfast sausages that you generally pick up at the grocery store. That also I guess would come with some logistical maybe challenges because you want to make sure that the turnover is going to be a lot faster. The food is going to be fresher and better quality.

But it is not the whole point of adding all of those crap to food, so that it sticks around and stays okay on the shelf for longer. So what are some ways that you I guess deal with that challenge?

**[0:19:46.2] LC:** Yeah, so one way is keeping it frozen as a natural preservative. So because we don't use added preservatives and chemicals the alternative to that is you have to freeze it to keep the integrity of the product. So that is one way and what's cool about most of this products is they have always been gluten-free. They have always been paleo certified. They have never had the fillers or preservatives or MSG.

So we have 130 years of perfecting these recipes and perfecting how we do it so it is not too hard for us to just do what we do best and keep that going. One of the things that I love and I noticed when I joined the company is, I made this comment to my stepdad, is I love that our products don't use a lot of plastic. So if you'd open like the box of chicken sausage for example, your product is going to be right in that cardboard box.

There is no added plastic in there and I said I love that from an environmental perspective. I like that we are not adding more plastic to the world and my stepdad is like, "Well that is how you become a 130 year old company. Sustainability is a part of what you do all the time." It is not just to get the attention from the consumer or try to meet what competitors are doing. It is just what you do naturally and you don't have to really advertise or market that. It is just part of your nature. So a lot of what we do we've been doing for so long just like the gluten-free.

We have been gluten free since the very beginning, however we just got the gluten-free certification not terribly long ago but it is just cool that where our relevancy has always been there. It's just a matter of bringing up the awareness around it.

**[0:21:41.8] AVH:** Yeah awareness and marketing right? People can talk about they label almond trail mix and it is like paleo snack and okay it is not so. It is like yeah, we know but you got to market it in ways to get it out to the people that matter. But it is so funny too because the more that I learn about the way food is made and you see just how many preservatives and additives and things that are on the food that are completely unnecessary.

I even get it in some cases where things that could be problematic for some people like MSG are added because of the taste. I get it. It may be ideal for people but I get it and then some things like certain preservatives are added to meats that is like you fully do not need it at all. It is just laziness. You are adding something that could be problematic or bad for people just becomes easier and I think that we are starting to see a change in the way educated consumers are looking at food and saying I would even –

And I would pay a little extra to make sure that I have – I am dealing with a company that isn't just taking the easy way out and is doing things the best way, you know?

**[0:22:49.6] LC:** I agree. I think more consumers are moving in that direction, which I love. It really fits into our mission at Jones too and it doesn't mean that we are not innovating. We are consistently adding new products like we just added a couple of years ago a no-sugar bacon, which is an awesome product to and then a whole line of no antibiotics, ever. So consumers who are more sensitive to antibiotics in their food, they can have those products too.

So even though our bread and butter is kind of the original recipe and the original products, we have to innovate and we have to stay relevant to where the industry is going. I just feel like Jones have a little bit of an advantage because a lot of this stuff is never – we don't have to worry about the chemicals and that kind of thing as much, so -

**[0:23:42.3] AVH:** And that is where your dedicated paleo section on the website comes in, right? For things that are even more sensitive like the no sugar bacon all that kind of things right?

**[0:23:51.3] LC:** Precisely, yes.

**[0:23:52.4] AVH:** So with that raises an interesting question though like no antibiotics ever. Because I guess it is just a reminder that often times unless something is explicitly mentioned on the packaging, you just take it for granted maybe that grass fed or free range would be antibiotic free but that is not always the case, right?

**[0:24:12.9] LC:** And I think something that I have learned over the past couple years with cattle and chicken, I feel like it is easier in the supply chain to get that product grass fed, pastured antibiotic free with pork or with pigs, it is just a different ballgame. It is harder to find suppliers that provide that type of product. If you wanted pastured pork, it is even hard to find that at WholeFoods let alone provide it to an entire manufacturing plant.

So pork is a harder animal to work with but we see the value in providing products that are important to our consumers but with the no antibiotics ever, we've had a lot of very positive feedback around that and that is something we'll definitely continue to and explore. It is just a tough thing with pork too and so yeah.

**[0:25:09.9] AVH:** It is good to be aware of these things and know what your options are and I think one thing that I have talked about a lot on this podcast is trying to strive to make the best choices you can but not being paralyzed by perfection. So sometimes people are like, "Well if I can't get a grass fed and grass finished pieces of steak that's never looked at a piece of plastic and has never been sick and is whatever, if I can't get that then I just give up."

And I think that there is a whole range of choices for people depending on what your activities are and your challenges and your budget and all of these things and it is not just a black and white like either get the highest quality perfection of whatever you are buying or just don't bother.

I think that there is a lot of and just again like you are saying, the more knowledge, the more education people have about how these processes work, what it takes to raise animals and process them properly I think that is important.

So what are your bestsellers?

**[0:26:08.7] LC:** Our bestsellers are certainly our sausage. So it is going to be our traditional pre-cooked golden brown line. So this is the pre-cooked sausage that you'll find in the freezer section. I think it is a product of just convenience. They're super delicious and they are easy especially for families if you want to get something protein filled for your kids in the morning. It is just really easy to either pop them on the microwave or put them on the pan with eggs or something like that.

It is just super convenient and a lot of our sausages and it is in most Costco's you can get big bulk bags of it, which is fantastic for a lot of families and stuff and you can feel good about feeding your family that. So that is certainly our top one.

**[0:26:59.3] AVH:** Cool, are there any other, you mentioned innovation and coming out with new products based on what the demand is out there with your customers. Is there anything else that you are working on or expand into the next little bit that you can tease for us?

**[0:27:14.2] LC:** Yeah absolutely. So we just released a chorizo which is really good. If you like a little bit of spice to that, that's delicious. It comes in a pre-cooked version. So you can find it in a patty in the freezer section but then we also provide a raw roll, if you want to crumble it up and put it into a taco or a salad or something like that that is really, really good and then we just continue to develop our no antibiotics ever line and we recently launched an organic chicken sausage in Costco, in the Texas region.

So we are doing a test and we are seeing how that goes. It's been going really well so far and based on how that goes we'll see if we can get larger distribution. But the organic chicken sausage is super delicious. I am really excited about that. We have a second manufacturing plant just next to our site's manufacturing plants and that second manufacturing plant is certified organic. So we expect to continue developing our organic products.

**[0:28:25.5] AVH:** I am really excited about the chorizo.

**[0:28:27.0] LC:** Yeah, it is really good.

**[0:28:28.5] AVH:** I am into it and it is so cool to think about how in such a short span of time relatively, we have gone from not being able to find any kind high quality breakfast, pre-made breakfast meats to like organic chicken sausage at Costco that you can buy in bulk. It is a pretty great time to be alive.

**[0:28:48.2] LC:** It is. I agree. I totally agree.

**[0:28:50.2] AVH:** That is very cool. How many farms do you – because you talk about being partner with local farms to get the meats fresh and quickly and so you don't have to freeze it before you process it and all of that kind of stuff, how many different farms do you work with across the state?

**[0:29:04.9] LC:** Well we work with farms pretty much in the entire Midwest. So you are correct in that we only use fresh meat. So we are never getting meat that's been pre-frozen and the reason for that is it's a better taste and it is a better quality. So we source from many different farms ranging in size throughout the Midwest. So it is getting tougher when we have to get more

of the no antibiotics or organic. It is tough to get enough supply when we are having a large distribution of product but we try to stay as local as possible.

**[0:29:47.6] AVH:** All right Lisa, well I am not going to take too much more of your time because as you have demonstrated over this chat, you guys are busy over at the farm. So we'll let you get back to it but is there anything else that you want our listeners to know? We will put obviously the website and the link to the paleo specific products and all of that good stuff in the show notes.

Is there anything else that you want people to know about what you guys do?

**[0:30:08.4] LC:** Well just that we really have enjoyed working with Paleo Magazine and we feel strongly about cultivating awareness around paleo and why paleo and gluten-free and we believe in this community and a lot of this community is word of mouth.

So we would love to spread the Jones story and to share our commitment to providing healthy great tasting products to people of all generations and we hope to continue that for a long time.

**[0:30:39.3] AVH:** Awesome, I appreciate that and I think that it is an important message too because a lot of our listeners and a lot of our readers at the magazine are obviously people who are very wanting to be educated about the foods that they eat and they want to be as healthy as possible and they also a lot of them families and they're busy and they want – time is of the essence always and I think that sometimes when people switch to a paleo or even a “healthier diet” they think that there are certain things that are officially off limits.

And there maybe this myth that breakfast food and breakfast meats and things like that are just preservative laden, poor quality meat and you guys are proving that wrong which is great because everybody loves a delicious breakfast sausage and bacon. So thank you for that it is important.

**[0:31:24.2] LC:** Well thank you.

**[0:31:25.5] AVH:** I appreciate it. All right, thanks Lisa for your time and thanks for the bacon.

**[0:31:29.7] LC:** Of course, anytime. All right thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[0:31:37.3] AVH:** Okay everybody that's it. Thank you as always for listening. If you are enjoying the podcast, please leave a nice rating and review on iTunes so we can continue to provide you with these high quality guest and free information and remember, if you fill out the form at the bottom of each episode's show notes, go to the show notes and check it out and leave a nice review, you may be chosen to win a free cookbook. Free stuff is good.

Thanks again to our show sponsor, Just Thrive Probiotic. They are the best, thank you for supporting the podcast and making probiotics that actually work and do what they say they are going to do. If you want to get in on that you can head to [thriveprobiotic.com](http://thriveprobiotic.com) and use the code "paleomag15" and get yourself some.

That's it, have a great week everybody.

[OUTRO]

**[0:32:40.8] AV:** The intro music for Paleo Magazine Radio is a song called Stronger performed by Alter Ego and I hope you love it.

[END]