



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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MDAC Hosts Freshly Picked Podcast Featuring Guests from Hinds and Rankin Counties

JACKSON, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) will release its latest episode of the Freshly Picked podcast featuring special guests Guillermo Salinas of Food Network’s “Halloween Baking Championship” and owner of Just Vanilla Bake Shop, and Natasha Haynes of the YouTube channel “Food Factor” and Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent with Mississippi State University (MSU), today at 9:30 a.m.

Within this episode, “Pumpkin to Talk About: Savoring Mississippi’s Sweetest Fall Harvests,” these guests hold conversations about the farm-to-table journey of Mississippi’s specialty crops and the process of how fall favorites, like sweet potatoes and pumpkins, go from seed to fork. Salinas discusses his career journey, how he started out selling a few baked goods at his local farmers market and how that enterprise grew into the thriving business it is today. He describes “feeling the heartbeat of the community” and allowing the public to influence the development of his products, which has in turn, advanced the Just Vanilla Bake Shop. Salinas goes on to talk about how to get creative with cooking. He encourages people to shop for locally sourced commodities that are grown and available around the same time. He explains how mixing these fresh ingredients allows you to be creative and try new dishes, saying, “what grows together, often goes together.”

Haynes was able to provide insight into various resources, educational programs and workshops offered by MSU Extension that help people learn more about growing and utilizing specialty crops. She also discusses the importance of buying locally and supporting our Mississippi farmers, while also getting the freshest produce, seasonings and ingredients available. She especially encourages others to shop at their local farmers market. She says these markets are not only a great source for healthy, fresh foods that are budget friendly, but they’re also a great setting for unique and educational experiences. Haynes describes how one gains invaluable knowledge from talking with the vendors, learning about their growing processes and hearing their personal stories.

Tune in to this week’s episode at www.msfreshlypicked.com and on all major podcast platforms.

The Freshly Picked podcast series, developed by MDAC, will feature 24 episodes and include specialty crop farmers, experts, entrepreneurs and/or chefs as they tell the stories behind their farms, businesses and the unique products they offer. Listeners can find new episodes every Thursday through February 2025 at www.msfreshlypicked.com, Spotify, Apple Podcasts or other major platforms.

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Photo attached.



The latest episode of MDAC’s Freshly Picked podcast, titled “Pumpkin to Talk About: Savoring Mississippi’s Sweetest Fall Harvests,” airs today at 9:30 a.m. Pictured L-R: Guillermo Salinas of Food Network’s “Halloween Baking Championship” and owner of Just Vanilla Bake Shop; Natasha Haynes, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent with MSU; and Claude Nash, podcast host and editor of MDAC’s *Mississippi Market Bulletin*.