

Being Productive in Retirement with Joanne Littau

David Crabill: Welcome to the Forrager podcast, where I talk with cottage food businesses, about their strategies for running a food business from home. I'm David Crabill, and today I am talking with Joanne Littau.

Joanne lives in Denver, Colorado, and sells homemade jams, jellies, and preserves with her cottage food business, [The Jelly Jar](#).

Joanne has always been very active in progressing Colorado's cottage food law, as well as expanding awareness of it. I remember visiting her booth at a market when I was in Colorado a few years ago, and I'm looking forward to hearing how her business has evolved since then. She has won awards for some of her creations, and I can personally confirm that her preserves are excellent.

And with that, welcome to the show. Joanne. Nice to have you here.

Joanne Littau: [00:00:48] Thank you, David. It's nice to be here.

David Crabill: [00:00:50] So, Joanne, can you share with us how you got started in the cottage food industry and how you started your jelly business?

Joanne Littau: [00:00:58] Friends said to me, you ought to sell your jelly because it was so good. And I poo-pooed it for awhile and they kept telling me I ought to sell it. So I did a cottage food producers food safety training back in 2014. And it has been cottage food jelly ever since. And I make jellies, jams, fruit butters, which are kind of like an applesauce, preserves, marmalades and many of those have won prizes at the Boulder County fair and also at the Arapahoe County fair, both counties here in Denver.

And that is how I got started. It was all my friends and now they get nothing. They have to buy it.

David Crabill: [00:01:54] I'm trying to remember when Colorado passed their cottage food law. Was that right around 2014?

Joanne Littau: [00:02:01] It was actually 2012 when they passed it through our legislature and they did a fairly good revision in 2014 and then continued to revise things and add different products that were allowable under cottage food. Um, they allowed pickling. I do not pickle anything. That's a whole nother, chapter in the life of cottage food. And, that is very popular.

And then they added, you could do chickens in some way. And I don't know anything about that. It's too far away from jellies.

David Crabill: [00:02:45] Yeah, you stay within your zone of all those different kinds of preserves. Why do you think you have been so focused? Or where does the background come from for your passion about preserving fruit?

Joanne Littau: [00:02:59] It may have come from my mother who used to make some jellies. But I think it's more, it was something I could do and I could be proud of and people liked it and, wanted more. So I just kept doing it. It's all mine And I think that's where the passion comes from. Also being involved with cottage foods, you get to know people all around the state and outside the state also. And we all talk to each other and tell each other our different tales of what goes right, what goes wrong and what could be improved. And we share recipes and some are good, some are not so good. But it's become a community and we're all there to support each other.

And I think that support helps with the passion that everybody feels about cottage foods and the production and going on. And it's a good feeling to be part of a very positive, supportive, group.

David Crabill: [00:04:05] Yeah. And I know that you are a big advocate for the cottage food law and movement and community in Colorado. I know you're [answering questions all the time](#) about the law.

Joanne Littau: [00:04:16] Oh, you're reading the Facebook.

David Crabill: [00:04:19] Oh, I just know. Yeah. I know Joanne, that you've been one of the most involved with the Facebook group, I think. And I'm just going off of memory, honestly, but I, I just know you're, you always have something to say about cottage food.

Joanne Littau: [00:04:32] Well, I think it's a positive, good program that anybody can partake in. And, it leads to positivity. It's, you know, you're standing there and you're making your jellies and your jams and you're canning them and you're going through the whole process. And then you go and you load your car with a tent and the tables and all the product and set yourself up at a Saturday market or whenever your market is.

And people come by and, they would taste jellies. And they would ooh and awe and say, this is really great. And again, ask me, how did I get involved and you know, where do I live? And can I buy this? And can I buy that. The conversation with another person and the laughter it makes it kind of human too, makes it very human.

And that helps too, at least for me, want me to make it make a better product, make a different product, make something that somebody has suggested and try it out. Not all suggestions are, as positive as I'd like them to be. Not everybody likes what I make.

I mean, one would think grape jelly would be a great seller. Well, it's not. It can take six months for six jars of grape jelly to sell.

David Crabill: [00:06:00] Interesting. Cause I feel like grape jelly is one of the most common jellies sold on the grocery store shelves,

Joanne Littau: [00:06:07] Yes. This is true. This is very true. And, but I don't know, they don't want grape jelly from me.

David Crabill: [00:06:14] maybe because they can so easily get it at the grocery store for a low price.

Joanne Littau: [00:06:20] Well, this is true. \$2 for Welch's grape jelly is a lot cheaper.

David Crabill: [00:06:24] They want something unique and, and your, some of your preserves are unique. Can you talk about, some of the flavors that you offer or I don't even know if flavors is the right word, but you do have unique products.

Joanne Littau: [00:06:38] Well, this year, this season strawberry rhubarb jam is walking off the shelves. Last year, black forest preserve was walking off the shelves and black forest is, is a cherry chocolate and a little bit of either amaretto or almond extract. But that's all they bought last year was the black forest preserve. This year, the only thing they're buying is the strawberry rhubarb.

David Crabill: [00:07:09] That's so funny, how there's that trend or change without them even communicating with each other?

Joanne Littau: [00:07:16] I know it's very, very odd. And here I was, I had prepared for a season of black forest. And so would you like black forest? And now I can't keep the rhubarb in stock. And before I found out that, red wine jelly was not permissible here in Colorado, and I think it's got to do with the alcohol, that one was the most popular. So, I don't know what will be next year. So this year it's strawberry rhubarb. I've made some raspberry rhubarb and we'll see how that sells. And I've made some blueberry rhubarb, and that's a new one, so I don't know how that's going to sell. So we'll see about the rhubarb road.

David Crabill: [00:08:01] Where are you sourcing the produce for your preserves?

Joanne Littau: [00:08:05] We have two large chains here in Colorado. One is King Soopers, which is now a Kroger and the other is Safeway, and then we have small stores like sprouts. They all carry the same product, same brand. So who's ever got the best price, gets my business that week.

David Crabill: [00:08:29] So, this is interesting to me because you're buying from the grocery store. You're not connected with a local farm or whatever, but your products stand out. I mean, they've won prizes at the County fair. Why do you think your products, I mean, you're using the same ingredients that everybody else has access to. What, what makes them so special or unique?

Joanne Littau: [00:08:52] I try to submit those products that are not common, like not everybody's going to make strawberry rhubarb, not everybody is going to make the black forest preserve. A lot of people will put in plain raspberry or plain cherry or peach butter, which I did submit. And it did do well. But I don't pick things like grape and strawberry and raspberry and submit them, which may be why I've been lucky and, You know, have won many prizes for, my different products.

I'm careful. I don't use, you know, if there's a berry that's moldy, it goes down the disposal. I don't even think about pulling mold off and using it. I don't know if that has something to do with it. I really, I honestly don't know. I never stopped to think about it.

David Crabill: [00:09:53] Well, what is the process like for when you make a new flavor? Like strawberry rhubarb? I don't know how long you've had that flavor, but do you go through a lot of iterations and tasting and trying different things before you finally land on the final creation?

Joanne Littau: [00:10:09] No, um part of cottage food here in Colorado says that you must use tested recipes. So these are recipes that have the proper pH or the proper amount of acid in them. And that prevents all of those bad little bugs, like botulism and salmonella and E coli and whatever else there is from getting into the jellies and, spoiling them. We don't want people to get sick.

So all of the, all the recipes that we use are tested and if they are not tested, they must be tested by the health department and approved. So, knowing that these recipes are tested and they are for the most part from Ball, they're pretty darn safe. And if something goes wrong, it's not the recipe, it is the producer.

having said that I follow the recipes Very strictly because I know I don't want somebody to get sick and I don't want to produce a product that, is half baked. I want it to be a hundred percent all the time. And, I don't know if that has something to do with them being so great or they just start out as really good recipes.

The other thing is I make sure that the fruit that I buy is ripe. And that could affect what comes out at the other end also.

David Crabill: [00:11:43] Yeah. So you're using standardized recipes from the ball book. What is the name of that book?

Joanne Littau: [00:11:50] There are [several ball books](#). Oh, and I can't even think of the names. And there's also [home preserving that is produced by the University of Georgia](#), which is another perfect book. It has almost the same thing that the ball book has. So either of those can be used and they're really good for beginners because they walk you through everything and they explain the process and how to do it and, they have a dictionary in the back, so that will help you with terminology and they will, they have another index in the back, which talks about what you can, substitute, and a lot of other little, and they talk about altitude, which is a big thing, because the canning books are written for people who are not at altitude. And we're at 5,280 feet here in Denver. So I just figure on 6,000 feet. I just add an extra, six minutes to the 10 minutes that it is called for in the recipe to keep it boiling.

And also if you are pressure canning, your poundage changes. Thankfully I don't use pressure cooker to do any of my canning. I just use a water bath canner and a timer and that works great for me.

David Crabill: [00:13:27] Yeah, I think that it's when you get into the low acid range that, most states don't even allow low acid products like canned vegetables, that's when they require the pressure canning method, right?

Joanne Littau: [00:13:43] Yes, and a part of the cottage food act is that we cannot can any vegetables. Pure and simple. And there's no way around it, except for pickling.

David Crabill: [00:13:55] Joanne you were talking earlier about how you love being part of the community and you'd share tales about your adventures with other vendors. What are some of those tales? Do you have any memorable moments over the years that come to mind?

Joanne Littau: [00:14:12] Oh, I lost a tent at one of the big markets last year. I didn't have enough weights on my tent and it blew over and the spokes bent. And everybody around me, the other vendors all came over and helped put some weights on and helped reset the tent and reset, the tables and everything else that had, turned over with the wind. But things like that make you very happy and these people weren't, I didn't know these people, but you just pitch in when something like that happens and it makes for good feelings.

Um, a customer had bought some Blackberry Jam back in February. And I didn't remember who he was and he sent me an email and said, I bought your wonderful Blackberry jam and now I want to buy some more and give it to my friends.

And I just about fell off the chair because that was a great statement. And I I'm a little skeptical of sharing things because I don't want people to think I'm tooting my own horn. But I shouldn't be, I do have a good product. And when other people tell me those things, that statements like that have been, have happened to them, I'm there to support them,

Do you know people, marmalade is another one. They hate marmalade if it's bitter. So I say, no, no, it's not bitter. It doesn't taste like dundee. I use normal navel oranges and if you don't like it, bring it back. Well nobody's ever come back with the jar. They've come back to order it.

Um, what other things... fun times at Boulder County fair. Sharing experiences with other vendors. Some have had problems with their jars sealing and I've had that too. They just, for some reason they just pop in the canner and you lose a jar and we all laugh about it because it all, it always happens to all of us. It really, really does. And if you change a jar, until you become accustomed to the feel of closing that jar, you're going to have lots of popped tops.

I, was like everyone else was using the [ball jars](#) and then decided, well, I want to change the jars. it became a price point issue for me. And so I bought 300 jars and 300 caps. Not one jar broke except the one that I dropped outside on the concrete, but the caps popped off. I must have lost at least a dozen jars because I didn't have the right feel. I didn't know what the right feel was when I closed the jar.

David Crabill: [00:17:22] Can you talk a little bit about that? You were using the more expensive brand named ball jars. And what did you switch to... some generic brand? Where did you find them? How much did they cost in comparison? I'd be interested to hear all that stuff.

Joanne Littau: [00:17:37] Okay. I was using the [ball jars](#) and they were approximately \$1.50, a jar. And when you're producing three and four and six, seven hundred jars a year, that becomes a big expense. So I went and looked for some other jars that were also eight ounces.

and I found some at a company called Amen Packaging here in Denver. They did bring the jars in from overseas. And the jars and lids together, we're not even a dollar. So right off the bat, I was saving approximately 75 cents on a jar. And that's a big amount when you're producing five or six hundred jars a year and maybe more. I actually am bad, I never counted.

I have continued to use these imported jars. I don't like importing them, but, I do. And if Ball jar would give me a break or they would lower their prices, I would go back to them.

David Crabill: [00:18:49] You need the loyalty discount coming from the ball company.

Joanne Littau: [00:18:52] That's what I need.

David Crabill: [00:18:56] Well, talk about what the pricing is like for the actual jars themselves. What are you selling your different products for?

Joanne Littau: [00:19:04] I started out at \$7 a jar in 2014. And I had gone to all the stores, to see what they sold an eight ounce jar of jam for, and, between the big stores, which sold you know, Smucker's or Welch's at \$2 or \$3 and whole foods or sprouts, which sold them, sold their jars for \$7 or \$8, or even some of the products were \$10.

Um, I thought that \$7 was a good place to start. And then as the taxes went up, I raised them to \$7.50 and then to \$8. And, this year I jumped the price from \$8 to \$10. And the new jars happen to be nine ounces, so it's not so terrible. Nobody has balked at the, at the price. Nobody's asked about the size of the jars, because I have the ball jars, and the eight ounce imported jars, and now the nine ounce jars and all three of them look very different and no, nobody has said anything about the price.

So I think that we'll just stick at \$10 a jar for a while and see what happens. I sold 30 jars last Saturday at the farmer's market, so that's a pretty good sale for me.

David Crabill: [00:20:33] And that's in the middle of the whole pandemic where people might be a little bit more hesitant to come out to the market, right?

Joanne Littau: [00:20:40] Exactly. We are, we're getting a good showing, and every week it seems to be a little bit more you know, it takes a little time for advertising to sink into people. But they're coming out. Which is good and, and a \$300 day in four hours is a good day, I think.

David Crabill: [00:20:59] What's nice about your product is that it's got a long shelf life, right? I mean, does your jelly ever go bad? I assume it probably doesn't.

Joanne Littau: [00:21:08] It, it doesn't go bad, but it will lose the flavor. Okay. So I don't know if you want to consider that bad. It doesn't get moldy or salmonella or E coli, but It will lose its flavor over time. Now cottage food, which bases everything off of the FDA, says that you can guarantee a year on the product if it's sealed. We could legitimately put on the label "good for a year from date of manufacture".

Now I've had stuff in the refrigerator for over a year. Others have had stuff on their shelves that has been unopened for over a year. Sometimes it's lost its flavor, sometimes not.

David Crabill: [00:21:53] But for you, this means that you never have to deal with inventory that's gone bad.

Joanne Littau: [00:21:59] No, I don't. I don't produce enough, to keep an inventory that long. I try to keep anywhere from 6 to 12 jars per flavor, so that if I run out of one, I don't have to rush during the week to remake it and remake five others, cause that's hard. I can make two batches a day and you only get about five or six jars depending on your fruit and how juicy your fruit is. I've gotten nine jars out of strawberries.

David Crabill: [00:22:36] How long has it taken you to make each batch?

Joanne Littau: [00:22:40] From start to finish, it takes some somewhere between three and a half to four hours. And when I say start to finish, I am including washing the fruit, chopping the fruit, cooking it down and adding what has to be added. Jarring it, cleaning it, cooking it or canning it. And then the dirty job of washing everything.

David Crabill: [00:23:08] Now that three to four hours, is that for one batch or for two batches? Cause you said you could make two batches a day.

Joanne Littau: [00:23:14] That's one batch.

David Crabill: [00:23:16] So is it six to eight hours for two batches or is it more efficient than that?

Joanne Littau: [00:23:23] Nope. It's six to eight hours for two batches. What makes it more efficient is to having cleaned the fruit and cut it up and measured it beforehand. I will try to process fruit, ahead of time, I'll clean it, I'll cut it up and I will measure it out and put it in the baggie and toss it in the freezer.

The baggie will have how much fruit is in there, two cups, four cups, strawberries, and the date that I processed it. So when I'm ready to make strawberry jam, I just have to go into the freezer and grab a bag that says 12 cups of strawberries and let it defrost a bit and then start making the jam. So you have about an hour that you've cut out of the whole canning process because you've already pre-processed the fruit. So I have all kinds of things and all kinds of fruits in the freezer.

David Crabill: [00:24:24] Okay. So I just want to talk about the pricing. I'm a, I'm a numbers person. So I'm, I've been thinking about what the pricing that you're getting versus the amount of time you're putting into this, because this is quite a, quite a time intensive process. And I'm thinking if you sold 30 jars of jelly at the market, that's like five to six batches of, of jelly, right?

And that, it takes at least three hours each. So we're talking about like 15, maybe up to 20 hours of processing time, plus the six, five, six hours at the market. So when you get down to it, it's probably about 20 to 25 hours of time to, even at your higher pricing of \$10 a jar, make \$300. Is that accurate? Am I, am I reading that right?

Joanne Littau: [00:25:16] Uh, I may, yeah. You're reading that kind of right.

David Crabill: [00:25:20] So it sounds like a labor of love to me more than an actual, super profitable business.

Joanne Littau: [00:25:27] Being a cottage food producer is not a profitable business that I can figure out.

David Crabill: [00:25:35] Well, at least for the, the jelly side of it.

Joanne Littau: [00:25:37] At least for the jelly. I just heard that some couple, who were cottage food producers, and they were making donuts and they both lost their jobs or one lost their job and the other one quit and they just delved right into making donuts and I think they're making them, commercially now. I'm not certain. But they're, everybody's buying them. They're just doing a bang up business. I think it's easier to transport donuts than it is jars. Jars are heavy, especially if they're loaded with jam.

David Crabill: [00:26:14] Although donuts go bad. That's one huge difference. They go stale pretty quick. So,

Joanne Littau: [00:26:19] They do. So I don't know. I haven't heard the second chapter in the story yet.

David Crabill: [00:26:26] Well, I just wanted to ask about this because I've seen a number of jelly businesses start and then stop and I think it's hard because when you factor in the amount of money that you should be getting for your time, and then you have to deal with the perceptions of customers who are dealing with grocery store, commercially factory produced products, you might just not be able to mark it up enough to actually make it a super profitable venture. So is it something that you would recommend? Would you recommend people start a preserve or jelly business?

Joanne Littau: [00:27:04] It's not profitable for me. And if there is a bit of profit, I could probably buy a jar of jelly.

Couple of years ago, a friend wanted to buy one of my products and I knew that selling her eight jar, you know, eight ounce jars was just not going to work. So we've, David sat, my husband David, sat down and, did all the numbers. And we had to charge her some phenomenal price for a quart sized jar of the jam that she wanted.

And for, for her, that was crazy. As good as my jam was, she could go buy two quarts at Costco for the same amount.

So price-wise it's you don't make money. It is a labor of love. It's a labor of fun.

David Crabill: [00:28:02] Yeah. So I want to ask, I mean, if you're not making a lot of money, then but you've been doing this for multiple years now, so why, why do you do it? What's the driving motivation behind it?

Joanne Littau: [00:28:16] It makes me feel productive. I am a senior citizen. I am retired. And what am I going to do? I've never been a golfer. I did play some tennis in my day, but I don't work all day. So this gives me something to do and I feel that it's productive. I'm doing something and then I go out and I sell it.

Which is productive and it's always nice to see a bottom line of \$300, even though I know I owe it, and the credit card says \$400, but, um, I don't know, seeing people and hearing people come back to me and say, gee, that was really great. Do have any more? It's a good feeling. Simple as that.

It's really nice to hear people, think that your product, that which you produced, you labored over, you loved over, that somebody else likes it enough to come back and buy some more of it.

I have one client who I met years ago at that farmer's market where we met, and she calls twice a year and says, What have you got? And she will buy \$150 worth of jelly twice a year. And she uses it, you know, at home and she gives it as gifts and it must be good if she keeps coming back. So that makes it nice. That's a good feeling. That's why I do it. It's fun.

David Crabill: [00:29:57] well, and I, and I appreciate hearing the different perspectives about why people run their cottage food business, because there are a variety of reasons why people run cottage food businesses, and sometimes those reasons supersede the money aspect of it.

So I'm just thinking about, for you, the price isn't as big of an issue, right? The amount of money that you're making isn't a driving motivating factor. So maybe you have kind of kept doing the same thing you've been doing, going to the markets, making the product in the same way. But do you think that, maybe if you wanted to invest a lot more in marketing, have a, I don't know. It doesn't seem like you have a website as far as I could tell.

Joanne Littau: [00:30:44] No I don't have time to keep it up!

David Crabill: [00:30:47] So if you did a lot more marketing and then say started making bigger batches, there might be a way. Yeah, I don't know, you tell me. But there might be a way to become more efficient or more effective with the processing or the time. Maybe the sourcing of products. I mean, you're paying grocery store pricing. And I don't know, maybe if you were more price motivated, you would have found wholesale accounts through farms or something like that to make it a more profitable endeavor.

Joanne Littau: [00:31:19] most of the fruit that I buy is on sale. Two six ounce containers of raspberries for \$5 is very cheap. I have walked away from pears. I have walked away from apples. Because I will not pay the price of \$1.89 for a pound for pears. We just don't have apple butter that week. Or we don't have ginger pear butter that week. maybe if I was more motivated, maybe if I had more people who could work for me, I could do better so... yeah, the money just sort of, I thought it was a good idea. And then I realized that nah, I'm not going to make any money out of this.

David Crabill: [00:32:08] Well, it just probably gets down to preserves being more of a commodity type product. I mean, you actually do a pretty good job of changing it up. I mean, you, you have some unique flavors, but it's not like a custom decorated item, right? That has a strong value add with the artistry of the creator, if that makes sense.

Joanne Littau: [00:32:32] Yes, it's not [Meraki cakes and bakes](#), I try to make something that's a little bit different, like the ginger pear and then people, you know, they just want and love apple butter.

And then when peaches are in season here in Colorado, they want peach jam, they want peach jelly, they want peach butter, with and without rum. So I try to gear to what people want. I'm not making any money out of this, that's for sure.

David Crabill: [00:33:02] Well, you you're at markets. I mean you're around produce, I assume. Have you talked with farms or farmers and tried to see what the pricing would be like if you went with a local farm versus going to the store?

Joanne Littau: [00:33:18] Actually, the guy who does fruit at the farmer's market that I am at, it's [Forte Farms](#), and he's been around for like 25 or 30 years, maybe even longer. I buy my peaches from him because I just like his product. I do get a break and then if I, he's got an outlet, if I go to the outlet, I get a better break.

Going to the outlets is time consuming also. They're usually not next door to me living in the city. Here in Denver, we don't have that many farms that are in the city. They're, they're a ways out, and that's a consideration, whereas I can jump in the car and go to the King Soopers or the sprouts and come back again, in maybe 45 minutes. As opposed to two hours out, two hours back. So time is, is a big consideration. It's there, it's convenient. So I do it.

And I'm probably not the best business person in the world, but I enjoy being at the market. I enjoy the adulation. Um, I enjoy the community and, that's all a good thing. That's all positive.

David Crabill: [00:34:43] Oh, yeah. You do a great job with your business Joanne. And I only ask the questions just because I think that someone who is thinking about starting this kind of business would like to know, would like to know what they need to be thinking about as they get into pricing and those kinds of things.

Joanne Littau: [00:35:02] Absolutely. There are a lot of resources that have to be looked into. And then we haven't even talked about, what instruments you need what pots and pans and cups and measuring cups and measuring spoons and graters.

And just everything that you have in your kitchen has to be bought new again for your cottage food. And that comes down to, why? Contamination. You don't want to use the pan or pot that you use to boil the hot dogs for boiling up your jelly.

Pots and pans should be non reactive. Aluminum is not a good resource, nor are any of the coated pots and pans. The pots and pans that are non-reactive like stainless steel don't

absorb anything. So it goes back to cross contamination. In a stainless steel pot, you can just take a Brillo pad or an SOS pad and scrub it good and clean, and it doesn't react to the acids.

David Crabill: [00:36:20] I know that the, the equipment being kept separate, that's certainly a best practice and recommended in terms of preventing cross-contamination, and some states actually require that the equipment be kept separate. And I'm trying to remember, is that an actual legal requirement for Colorado? Is it just a recommended best practice?

Joanne Littau: [00:36:46] It's a recommended best practice, in the food safety training, that Colorado state university gives. And I found it to be very good. There are in, in Colorado, you can become a cottage food producer by taking various courses. One, and I think it's the best, is the [Colorado cottage food producers food safety training, which is given by Colorado State University](#).

The CSU course is, they tell me it's \$40. For a four hour course, you're with three masters in food science people, whose focus is food safety. You're in a classroom. You have interaction with the teachers, with the other people. And I just think that that's the best way to learn. And when you take the CSU course, they're gearing it to the law and guiding you to what you can and cannot do under cottage food law here in Colorado, and I think that's important. That's very important. And you, you know, you, you meet others who are doing the same thing as you, or who are not doing the same thing as you and who have had experiences in the past and you can call on them if you need help or you want to recommend them.

We have a new gal who I met, I guess a year ago, and [she makes ghee](#). She had it tested. She had it approved. And the health department here in the state of Colorado said, Yes, you can make it. And now she is producing ghee and doing quite well.

David Crabill: [00:38:33] Yeah, she's the first person I've ever heard making ghee under the cottage food law, but it's, it's culturally significant for her being an Indian cuisine item and, I've occasionally had to make a recipe that called for ghee and it's something that I never have on hand. I think you can make it at home, but it's probably not nearly as good as hers.

Joanne Littau: [00:38:54] Well, there's nothing as good as a homemade product. And I think part of what makes cottage food really important to the public is the fact that you can stand there and say, at least I can with my jellies and jams and preserves and butters, There's no junk in here.

And there isn't, there's no corn syrup, there's no high fructose corn syrup. There are none of the, other chemicals that are, or additives or preservatives. Everything is fresh and natural. Granted the other side of the coin is that it doesn't last a whole lot long time. A year and maybe that's about it, but you start off by saying, and it's junk free. We have no junk jelly here at this booth. And the customer laughs and their eyes light up and they like that idea. That they're getting a pure product.

David Crabill: [00:40:02] Earlier, you were talking about your orange marmalade and how it is, uh, Not bitter and you're going to laugh at this, but believe it or not, I still had your unopened jar of marmalade in the fridge because I'm not a fan of marmalade because it is,

bitter, right? It's bitter. But, so when you said that, I was like, Oh, maybe I should try that. I just, I've just never gotten around to opening it. This is probably, what is it a year...

Joanne Littau: [00:40:31] What's the date? There should be a date on it.

David Crabill: [00:40:33] Oh, there is a date on it. Oh my gosh. It's about a year and a half old, December 21st, 2018. So...

Joanne Littau: [00:40:44] And you've had it in the refrigerator?

David Crabill: [00:40:46] I have I've had it in the refrigerator, but I just tried it and it's, it's gotta be the best marmalade I've ever tasted.

Joanne Littau: [00:40:55] Thank you, sir.

David Crabill: [00:40:58] Because it is a little bit bitter. Like, I mean, it is, it's made out of orange, right? So it's got a little bit that bitterness, but I would, I mean, I'm going to eat this.

Your other jelly, by the way. I think you gave me the triple Berry jelly and that did not last a long time at all. So this probably isn't going to last very much longer now that it's opened. But I can, I can confirm in the moment right here that, you're making good stuff and you probably should be charging twice the price for it all, but, you probably can't, unfortunately.

Joanne Littau: [00:41:33] No I don't think I could sell it, but, oh, we'll have to get you some more. When you need a break from that charming, lovely Ray.

David Crabill: [00:41:50] My son.

Joanne Littau: [00:41:52] Yes. Put him to bed and sit yourself down with a cup of tea and a toasted English muffin with marmalade on it.

David Crabill: [00:42:01] We do need a break sometimes from that little boy. He's now walking and he's just turned a year old. So he keeps us on our toes these days.

Joanne Littau: [00:42:11] I'll bet he's a bright little thing too. Curious? Is he a curious little one?

David Crabill: [00:42:18] Yeah. He always seems to get into anything that's new. So I'm going to need to show him, I'm going to show him this jar of marmalade cause he'll probably find that really fascinating.

And he actually does eat oranges. So I'll probably let him have some of this and he'll probably think it's great.

Joanne Littau: [00:42:36] Oh, I'd love to hear that. I'd love to hear that. I should send you some other stuff that might be, you know, more acceptable to his palette at his young age. Of course, who knows?

David Crabill: [00:42:49] Well like I said, he he'll eat oranges straight, so I can't imagine why he wouldn't like this, which is not nearly as bitter as a plain orange.

Joanne Littau: [00:42:59] Really. Okay. Well, there's a lot of, unfortunately there's a lot of sugar in there.

David Crabill: [00:43:05] uh, yeah. Well, he loves sugar. We don't let them have very much sugar. So I probably won't give them very much of this, but I'll let them taste it. He'll probably think it's great.

Well, we got off track. It's, we've been talking for a while Joanne, and before we go, I just was wondering if you had any advice that you would give to somebody starting a cottage food business.

Joanne Littau: [00:43:33] Oh, boy. Now let's see, you should know going into it that like any other business it's going to cost you money in the beginning and that you are going to make mistakes and that's okay, because you learn from them. And, there are all kinds of, you're starting a business, so you need to know the tax laws and the other laws related to your business. And that can get very complicated, but there are people out there to help you.

David Crabill: [00:44:16] People like yourself. You just have to go onto the [Colorado producers Facebook group](#), whatever it's called. Ask Joanne.

Joanne Littau: [00:44:28] Yeah I'm there. Here in here in Colorado, there's a fabulous piece of information. It's Department of Revenue 1002 and what it does is it lists [sales and taxes for the whole state](#). And they revise this instrument for lack of a better word twice a year. Because they've, I guess that's when they up and down the taxes and it has all kinds of taxes, like the scientific tax and the city tax and the County tax, some of which you don't pay to the county, but you have to pay them in your state tax. And, you know, rural taxes and RTD tax and these 17 pieces of paper have so much information in them that they, I have started to call them the Colorado cottage food bible, because if you don't know it's around, you're going to be so lost.

And having a good accountant who understands the cottage food business and the law mostly, is a good person to have in your back pocket.

Know that cottage food is a labor of love. It can be a lot of fun. Going to county fairs and festivals and farmer's markets can be a lot of fun, if you're in that sort of mindset. For the most part, people are friendly. They're curious. They will come back and tell you that something is really good. Nobody's really told me anything was really bad. And just know it really is a labor of love. You're not going to make a whole lot of money.

And you should pick your product wisely. Making jelly is costly both financially and time-wise. It just is one of those things. So try it. If you don't like it, well, you've tried it, and move on to the next thing. But I think you'll get caught, and that's a good catch, at least for me it was.

David Crabill: [00:46:51] Yeah, get caught up in the cottage food industry, you mean?

Joanne Littau: [00:46:56] Yes.

David Crabill: [00:46:58] Well, thank you so much for coming on today Joanne and sharing a little bit about your business and what you've learned over the years. How could people reach out to you if they want to contact you?

Joanne Littau: [00:47:12] The best way to reach me is via email, which is jellyjarllc@gmail.com.

David Crabill: [00:47:28] Perfect. Well, thank you again for coming on. I always appreciate talking to you.

Joanne Littau: [00:47:36] Oh, you're so welcome. Take care, David. Bye bye.

David Crabill: [00:47:42] That wraps up another episode of the Forrager podcast. It's fun to hear how much joy and purpose this business gives Joanne in retirement and how involved she is with the cottage food community in Colorado.

If you are thinking about starting a cottage food business of your own, head on over to forrager.com to check out your state's cottage food law.

For more information about this episode, go to forrager.com/podcast/12. Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.