

## Baking A Difference with Kathy Cherie

**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'm talking with Kathy Cherie. Kathy lives in Elk Grove Village, Illinois, and sells custom cakes with her cottage food business [Cake Du Jour](#).

Kathy has run her small business for many decades, but has been frustrated by her county's health department for not enabling her to sell basic cakes illegally from home. She has been a strong advocate for improving the laws in Illinois, which is one of the strictest States when it comes to cottage food laws. She has design many custom cakes for customers, and she's also won awards in some cake competitions.

In addition, she has designed and donated over 20 cakes to the charity [Icing Smiles](#), to help children with fragile medical conditions. And with that, welcome to the show, Kathy. Nice to have you here.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:00:59] Oh, thanks, David. Thanks for asking me.

**David Crabill:** [00:01:02] So Kathy, can you talk a little bit about when you started to do this? I know it's been a long time.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:01:09] it has been, like a lot of cake decorators. I started because I wanted to make my baby's birthday cake. I had a friend who dabbled in it a little bit and she came over. We completely ruined my kitchen and I made a cake and boy was, I hooked, Within a year or two, after that, I started taking the Wilton classes and never looked back.

It was kind of before the advent of internet where you could just log on and find all kinds of classes. So after I finished the, the Wilton classes then it was probably 20 years of trial and error on my own learning, how to do all kinds of things and learning about the wide world of cake decorating beyond Wilton. And then came the internet and wow. Things exploded then.

**David Crabill:** [00:01:58] So, what about, what year did you get started?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:02:01] well the first cake, was in 1982. I started the Wilton classes Probably 83, maybe early 84. But that, that's when I started the Wilton classes. Um, some friends knew I was doing the classes and asked me to make cakes for their birthdays and events and baby showers and so forth. And that's kind of how it got going. Word of mouth all the way.

**David Crabill:** [00:02:27] I know that you've been a big advocate for improving the laws recently, like within the last decade. But did you look into the laws back then? I mean, what, what were the laws back in the 1980s?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:02:40] it simply wasn't allowed, you know, it, unless you, unless you had, you know, a storefront of licenses or, or you had a place in your home that was subject to inspections and, you know, separate doorways and all of that, which where I was living at

the time, simply wasn't an option. you know, so I mean, I, I talked to the health department, and they told me that, unless I got to be really, really big.

They were probably just going to be ignoring me. Cause there really just isn't that much that can go wrong with a cake.

**David Crabill:** [00:03:19] Yeah, I've been able to keep track of the laws since maybe the nineties, but I've kind of wondered if back in the eighties or before, if they were still disallowing these kind of home businesses and it sounds like they were, but it also sounds like they weren't too uptight about it.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:03:36] Right, at least in my town. Other towns might've been stricter about it. you know, if you got to be too big or too well known or making too much money, you know, selling beyond basically what I was doing, then they'd have a little bit more of a problem with it, but basically not the way I was doing it.

**David Crabill:** [00:03:57] Right. And it would be nice if health departments took that stance a little bit. More often, because I know if they, they, they know they should know the science behind it and know how non-risky cakes are. And, um, yet Illinois has been quite a stickler for restricting the laws and, um, so you're in cook County, you're, you're in the same County where Chicago is,

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:04:23] Yes, just I'm just outside Chicago actually.

**David Crabill:** [00:04:27] and they still don't allow the new law, which is the home kitchen operation law. Have you, have you talked to them about that?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:04:37] I have, I've talked to everybody about it. I have talked to my state Senator, I've talked to, state representatives. I've talked to health departments. I've talked to my towns, business licensing. I mean, I'm in there pitching, I've I've taken the food safety classes. I said, look, I've got insurance and cook County just as not moved by this.

And it's not just home sales. It they're that way about everything. food trucks for instance, have had a terrible time in cook County and in Chicago.

**David Crabill:** [00:05:13] And have they given you any kind of reason when they, when you talk to them?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:05:18] No. No

**David Crabill:** [00:05:22] Yeah. I, I think that it's probably just going to come down to, um, some significant state law that overrides them at some point. And, that hasn't happened yet. Unfortunately.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:05:34] not yet, but I keep, I keep trying, uh, right now, you know, with the pandemic going on, I know that the, Then our state legislature is kind of backed up. They're not meeting, the way they should. So right now, when, when I really have a lot of time to be dealing with this, they don't so.

**David Crabill:** [00:05:54] Yeah, I'm hoping that this. podcast episode, will maybe increase a little bit more awareness about the current situation in Illinois, and hopefully a few more people will be like you and be a little bit more proactive about promoting change.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:06:09] Right. You know, cause it, it really isn't fair. you know, some people can do it. Some can't. If you live on this side of the County line, you can, if you live on that side of the County line, you can't, and you might be right across the street from each other. And that really just isn't fair.

**David Crabill:** [00:06:25] And can you explain why that is the case in Illinois?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:06:31] it was kind of a compromise, as I recall, when the, uh, little Chloe's cupcake law came into effect here, it was a knee jerk reaction, To her, selling cupcakes outside the home. She was a little girl and, and the state went after her. And, it was, it was a knee jerk reaction at the time, and then, as, as the rules were evolving, a lot of the individual, places were saying, you know, we really don't want that. You know, that's not how we do it here. You know, we just do farmer's markets or we just do that. So, Illinois basically has two different, we've got the farmer's market, thing where people can do that.

but for obvious reasons, decorated cakes really aren't great at farmer's markets. It's hot. There's you know, Dustin. Dirt and bugs blowing around and, and that just really just doesn't work for cake.

**David Crabill:** [00:07:26] No, definitely not. And yeah, a little bit of background on Chloe's story. That was big news a few years ago.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:07:32] she got a whole new kitchen out of the deal.

**David Crabill:** [00:07:34] She did. And they basically passed a law that enabled her to run her business from home. But, it was an opt in thing via the counties and basically her County opted in and almost no other County did.

So a lot of counties do not have the ability to use that law in Illinois. And it's pretty unfortunate.

Well, let's talk a little bit about your business. So it's a, it's a side, it's a pretty small side business, I believe. Cause you give a lot of your stuff away and um, I don't know how, how much are you selling and is it all under the table or do you use a commercial kitchen sometimes? Can you talk a little bit about that?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:08:17] I am fortunate that I do have access to a commercial kitchen that I, use as much as possible. right now I do not have any access to it. So. anything I'm doing right now, which isn't much, I am doing from home. And people know that I'm doing this from home. but I generally have access to a commercial kitchen that, I prefer to use, because it is an inspected kitchen and that just adds another layer of, security for my, for my customers to know that I've done it in a commercial kitchen. I especially do all my icing smiles cakes in that kitchen. And from a practical standpoint, it's huge. It's fabulous. The counters are wonderful. I've got a, multilevel, convection oven to use huge refrigerators and freezers.

It's wonderful. So from a practical standpoint, it's a whole lot easier to do my, to do my work there than it is here in my home.

**David Crabill:** [00:09:16] Are you paying for that space?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:09:18] I am not. we do have a share a kitchen in my town. and I figure that if there comes a time when I'm not able to use the kitchen I'm using, I would check them out.

I think is fairly expensive, which would leave the price of my cakes. it would make them cost prohibitive for customers, for my customer base. Anyway.

**David Crabill:** [00:09:41] Or you might not make any money.

well, so you mentioned icing smiles. Can you talk a little bit about what that is and how you've been involved with it?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:09:52] I started with icing smiles wow, I'm not even sure how long ago it's been several years. it's an organization, where bakers make cakes for any occasion in the world. you know, be it a, you know, a birthday, end of treatment, graduation, whatever they might have coming up.

Uh, there's two kinds of cakes that the bakers can do. A dream cake, which is, you know, tiered and over the top and has sculpting and figures on it or something that makes it just extra special or a, what they call fun cakes, which are more of your standard, one tier decorated cake. I think most bakers, whether or not a dream cake was requested, even if it's just a fun cake, I think they veer more toward the dream cake end of it anyway. the families request them. they, have to do it through, you know, their hospitals or doctors, or wherever. they request the cake for the event. they can give you, you know, a theme, but they can't choose a, A decoration. It has to be up to the decorator because different decorators have different skill sets and may not be able to, comfortably do what a family might request. so particular decorations are up to the decorators and then, you know, then the family has that and that that's one thing they don't have to worry about.

I've delivered to hospitals, I've delivered to homes. I've delivered to a rehab. and what's really cool, I think is that the siblings are included. So many times when you've got, you know, a medically fragile child the siblings simply get lost in the shuffle because so much of the, parent's attention has to go to the sick child.

And, uh, Icing smiles recognizes that and, provides cakes for siblings as well. I love that organization.

**David Crabill:** [00:11:54] Yeah. Icing smiles is a great organization. I know a lot of cottage food businesses support it and donate cakes to it. so what does it take to get involved? Is it just signing up and then you get to make a cake?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:12:09] just go to their website. Absolutely. You can just go to their website, and, and sign up. you know, there, there there's some questions, but they're

relatively easy. I know when I signed up several years ago, they wanted to see some pictures. So I sent in some pictures of what I've done.

I don't know if they still do that. I would imagine so. You know, they ask, if you have access to a commercial kitchen, they ask if, you know, several questions, but they don't have you jumping through hoops to participate. In fact, if you're, not even that big of a cake maker, they, they have a separate part where you can do decorated cookies. So people who don't do cakes, but do cookies, they can also participate in this. So, by all means, check out the website. [icingsmiles.org](http://icingsmiles.org).

**David Crabill:** [00:12:56] It sounds weird to say there's not any kind of competitive nature to this. Like there's, there's no having to prove your cake skills or

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:13:06] No, no, not at all. Not at all.

**David Crabill:** [00:13:11] So what are some of the memorable stories that have come out of your involvement with icing smiles.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:13:19] Well, I remain friends with, several of the families that I provided cakes for. You know, and, and, and that's really. That's really nice to be able to keep up with the children and know how they're doing, you know, how their, you know, how their health is doing. See what else that see what, see what other happy things are going on in their lives.

You know, after, after they've had, a medical episode, you know, some of the children have been. You know, fully recovered and, and, and are doing just great others continue to struggle with their health. It's heartbreaking. It's heartbreaking. And as a mother and a grandmother, every time I read these, I just feel so fortunate that whatever issues we've had, with our children and we have had some medical issues. They're fine. They're fine. You know, it's never been a life or death struggle really. And, I go to bed every night, grateful for that. Just by my, interactions with the medical families, we've had. One interesting thing. My daughter's children are in school and, and the school that they go to, is the hub for, special education in their district.

And so, you know, we were, we were on Facebook and I happened to notice that, one of the people commenting on one of her posts had a picture of her child and I thought, wow, that looks like one of the kids that I baked for. So I mentioned it to my daughter and we talked a little bit and it turned out to be the same name.

And she goes, let me look. She went back into her friend's Facebook page and found the birthday party where I had provided the icing smiles cake for her friend's son. So it's a small world.

**David Crabill:** [00:15:09] Now I've seen some pictures of these cakes that you've made and they're quite elaborate. They're, they're very customized. And you know, like you said, they're, dream cakes.

so. What is that process like? Is most of that creativity coming from you or is you're getting a lot of ideas from people? Like, are they sharing stories or it's just something that they're interested in?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:15:35] Well, then they fill out, they fill out a form. in, in that particular case, it was a little boy named James and he was turning seven. So they went with a James Bond theme. James Bond, 007. and, uh, so then, if nothing pops into my head instantly, I will do a search for cakes. and I don't like to copy a cake. I don't like to copy my own cakes, let alone anybody else's, but I will take a bit of this and a bit of that and a bit of somebody else's and put it together into a whole design that works for a theme that I'm doing.

**David Crabill:** [00:16:10] Thinking back, I mean you've been doing this for decades, but is there one cake in particular that stands out to you as being maybe a favorite cake or an accomplishment?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:16:22] I would say that there's three there's three. one would be, my daughter's wedding cake. Which was a labor of love. my niece's wedding cake, my goddaughter's wedding cake, again, another labor of love. they, they both came out, beautiful. My daughter, my daughter's cake would be different if I were doing it now, but 15 years ago, she got the skills I had then. They've improved some, Rachel's got the benefit of that. And then the other cake would be, The big wedding competition cake, that I made, locally here in a, in a, in a, [big competition national competition](#) here. Took a leap of faith to, to do that. it was, it was kind of a scary thing for me to, to put it out on the table, put it out in public, like that, but I was, I was really pleased with it, how it, how it came out. I got a third place finish for that, that I was, I was happy with and, I was very proud of that one. not simply because of how the cake came out, but that I gathered up the courage to do that. that meant something to me that, that, you know, on a personal level, just to have the courage enough to, to go out there and do that.

**David Crabill:** [00:17:36] I think I saw that you have participated in a number of competitions though, right? Like what other competitions have you been a part of?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:17:42] um, I've, I've done a couple of gingerbread competitions. I've got a first place and a second place on those. again, fairly local competitions here. I have not taken my gingerbread to North Carolina. I have not screwed up that kind of courage. but,

**David Crabill:** [00:17:58] and what's in North Carolina?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:18:00] that's the big national gingerbread competition every year. It is huge and the top of the line are there. And even the lowest level of the people entering that are so far past my skills. but I love looking at them and it does inspire me to try new things and, and to get ideas on what I can do with my gingerbread. So I like doing gingerbread. I call that in the, holiday season, I call that my cottage industry. Did you get my play on words, there?

**David Crabill:** [00:18:33] Yep. so what are some of the techniques that you're using in these cakes? What are, what makes them difficult or labors of love, as you said.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:18:43] That would be, the sugar flowers. I have taken thousands of dollars worth of sugar flower classes, from one of the top sugar flour artists in the whole world. and, that is Robert Haynes. I go up to sugar delights and Manistee Michigan. And Robert flies here from London to teach these classes.

his flowers are stunningly realistic. the materials used are, are made from real flowers that we can then convert into sugar work. It's not cheap, but the results are stunning. You know, we often, after we finish a class, we will take them out to the garden and pose them like they were just growing in the garden and you can't tell that they're not real. You can't tell that these are sugar flowers. They're magnificent. and when I use those on a wedding cake, like I did the competition cake, like I did my niece's cake. it adds something that is really extraordinary to a cake. And, I love doing the sugar flowers. it excites me to make them realistic, realistic down to, down to parts of it that you can't even see, but just knowing that it's there makes it extra special, for me as the creator. Nobody else might know what's there, but I do.

And while I'm working on it, knowing that I've got it botanically, correct, from the inner most pedals to the tips of the leaves, it makes it that much more exciting to me.

**David Crabill:** [00:20:27] I did see on your Facebook page, some of these flowers and they do look immaculate. So, yeah, I, I did want to get into that a little bit because I just wanted to know how long these flowers take you to make.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:20:43] some, some of the bigger ones, the avalanche Rose that can take me, to do, to do a single Rose. It can, it can take me five hours of actual working time, not just, you know, allowing the, gum paste to set and all, but actual working time. if, if I'm doing a few of them, you know, and you get, an assembly line going kind of thing, then, you know, I, it doesn't necessarily take five hours each.

but yeah, I would say, I would say, I would say five hours would be tops.

**David Crabill:** [00:21:15] And what kinds of flowers are you able to make at this point?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:21:22] Oh boy, several kinds of roses, peonies hydrangea, dusty Miller. poppies what's that big Hawaiian flower, that one. There's been any number of them. I even made a butter, a gum paste butterfly that was so detailed that butterfly had a tongue. Yes. Who knew?

**David Crabill:** [00:21:48] I'm not even sure I really thought about butterflies even having tongues. I mean, it makes sense but.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:21:53] I never did either till he said, now we're going to make a tongue. Like really? That was the first I'd ever thought of it too.

**David Crabill:** [00:22:03] I think I saw a picture, I think, of, of a daffodil. You also made a daffodil.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:22:08] Oh yes that daffodil. How could I forget that? I love daffodils.

**David Crabill:** [00:22:11] And then, um, berries too. Right.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:22:14] Yes. Yes, absolutely.

**David Crabill:** [00:22:16] And I actually, I saw the picture of the berries and it wasn't until I read a comment that I actually realized that they weren't real.

So, yeah, it's pretty impressive. Um, but probably not cost effective if you're actually trying to make those for a cake to sell. Right.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:22:37] well, the way I market that, is, is you don't have to cover your cake in them, you know, and you don't have to use the biggest ones. but you can have statement flowers on your cake, where you have one, you know, two, maybe three on your cake, just to make a statement and then you're not covering a cake with it and it does keep the cost, you know, relatively, you know, in line. Wedding cakes, aren't cheap.

**David Crabill:** [00:23:07] So do you have a semi standard price for adding those flowers to a cake?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:23:15] the bigger, the bigger ones are, I charge \$25 for them, the smaller ones, maybe 10 or 15. So you can put, you know, you know, a handful of say flowers that are maybe the size of your fist. and, and you can put two or three on those, on a cake for 50 or \$60, and you've made a statement and it doesn't, you know, it doesn't have to break the bank.

The big avalanche roses, those do take more time and, and I would, you know, but, but you, you can get by with maybe one. You know, big avalanche Rose, to make a statement depending on how big your cake is. And you can do that for, maybe 30 or \$35. So, you know, depending on your cake design, you can use something like that and still have it be, Make make a difference on your cake, in how it looks, without, without breaking your budget.

And I work with people on their budgets, you know,

**David Crabill:** [00:24:18] Well, yeah, it certainly sounds like you're keeping it affordable for customers, but it, it, I mean, you said that it takes five hours to make a flower, right. And if you're making \$25. That doesn't sound like it's really panning out in terms of, uh, paying you for your time.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:24:33] Well, it, it, the, the flowers I'm charging \$25 for are not taking me that are not taking me five hours.

Yeah. and those are the ones that, you know, I will make several of at a crack, you know, and then I will, I'll color them when I need them for whatever cake. So it does, it does work out.

I don't make a ton of money at this, but I'm also not in the business of losing money. and it's also important to me to not devalue the industry, you know, because if, if I undercut the local bakery, I'm not doing them or me any favors

**David Crabill:** [00:25:10] right. So what do you price your cakes at right now?



**Kathy Cherie:** [00:25:14] Well, it depends.

**David Crabill:** [00:25:16] Or just talk about, you know, for somebody maybe thinking of starting a cake business, what are the things they should be thinking about when it comes to pricing?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:25:25] okay. The first thing they need to do is find out how much it costs you to make the cake. Forget about time right now, how much is it costing you to make that cake? go to the store. Don't look at sale prices. look at the actual full price of every ingredient you use on a cake. Every one. Total it up, find out, you know, how much, how much of that flour are you using, how much sugar, how much cocoa, how much, whatever.

if you're, if you're using cake mixes, find out everything. How much is that cake costing you to make? And keep that right in front of you so that you never charge less than that, even if you're, even if you're giving it away, you know what you're giving away. once you've determined, how much a cake costs and it's not just the ingredients, you've got to factor in, you know, cake boards and boxes, And, and that kind of thing, you know, supports in a tiered cake. You've got to figure all that in and know what it costs you. Then figure out how much time you're spending on it. And that's everything from designing the cake to shopping for the cake, to baking it, to decorating it. And the cleanup. One of my big jokes is that, you know, I'll bake for free, but you are going to pay through the nose for me to clean up, But you have to, you have to count the cleanup.

and you count all that time. Figure out how much you're paying yourself. You know, maybe if, if you're new at it, you know, you want to, you know, pay yourself. I don't know, \$10 an hour, let's say. Um, and if you've been around the block and you're very skilled, and you're also faster than the new person, you can charge, you can charge more than that and you can charge for your time, but figure that out and then build in a profit. You've got to build in a profit, pay yourself for your time. Pay yourself for your supplies and build in a profit. So that you can go out and buy new things. You can buy new supplies, you can take a class and you can do all that, from your profit. that's not eating into, you know, what you've earned, just spending your time.

**David Crabill:** [00:27:41] And how does all this translate into what prices the customer sees? Like what, what elements of pricing should somebody consider adding for custom cakes?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:27:52] Okay. I keep a general list. I know what it costs me to make a cake of, you know, say a chocolate cake in everything from a six inch to a 16 inch. And if I'm going to be putting flowers on it, I know that these particular flowers are going to add that to the cost. If I'm putting, fondant figures on it, I know that that, adds this to a cost, if I'm just doing a simple fondant little decorations that just get stuck on the cake, I have a minimum, you know, that I will charge for that because the fondant costs me something.

so, so when I get a, an inquiry, I can just consult my, my list and, and have a pretty good idea, and give them an estimate right off the get go. And then, we can adjust from there depending on what they need.

a lot of times a customer will come, with a very set idea of what they want. and other times, you know, they're, they're looking for guidance. And I will send them to Pinterest or I will send them, you know, just Google, you know, that cake, get some ideas, you know, tell me what you think. And then we can work to come up with a cake design that is in your budget. So, that's kind of how I work with customers.

**David Crabill:** [00:29:11] And has your pricing structure changed over time since you started back in the eighties to today?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:29:17] Oh, it sure has. It absolutely has. back in the day, I am quite sure I was taking a beating. And the longer I did it, the better I got about asking for my price. I never make anybody feel bad if they can't afford my cake. you know, sometimes your budget just doesn't allow for custom work like this and, and that's okay.

**David Crabill:** [00:29:43] How do you get customers? Is it all word of mouth or do you do any marketing?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:29:50] no, I don't.

**David Crabill:** [00:29:51] I guess you probably wouldn't do any marketing, just because of the, uh, the nature of the way the laws are in Illinois.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:29:59] exactly. that, that is exactly right. And I would like to, I would like to be able to have a website or to, or to put myself out there a little more. but you know, that's not the way it's played out for me. Hopefully it will for people just coming up in it now. but for me, that's not the way it's gone.

but, but yeah, it's, it's been word of mouth. I was surprised a couple of weeks ago to, to get a phone call from, somebody who works with a friend of my sister. And she put a request out on Facebook in Chicago, saying, you know, where can I get, you know, something like this done.

And a bunch of them jumped on and said, Oh, you know, go to Kathy Cherie. And that just, that blew me away. That blew me away. But, you know, they've had my cake at my niece's wedding and baby showers and christenings and, you know, family events that, you know, they had been at. And there you go. It's all been, it's all been word of mouth for me, because I haven't had any choice.

when my kids were young, I used to, donate cakes to PTA events at their school, you know, and teacher parties and things like that. so a lot of people in the neighborhood got to know me through that. and they're still customers now. But basically, word of mouth.

**David Crabill:** [00:31:25] Has there ever been any issue with you doing, I don't know if you've done anything under the table, but has there been any issue with you not being like a official business in that sense?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:31:38] Yes. not, not very long ago, I had a string of recommendations on our local Facebook pages and, people, people were talking about my cakes and one day I got a phone call from, my village's business licensing, department wanting to know what was

going on. As it happens since I started this, I've been in touch with, the health department and, state legislature, representatives and, and so on. so, I was very honest and I said, yes, I've been doing it. I've been working to try to get, to become, you know, quote unquote legal, but it's, it's been very difficult in, in our County and, You know, I have spoken with the health department numerous times, but here we are. And if you need me to stop, I will stop. And so she went and talked to the health department people and they said, Oh yeah, we know her, you know, she's been doing this. And you know, we've, we've absolutely talked to her. She carries insurance. She's, she's taken the food handlers courses. and they came back and, you know, I got a phone call back saying, just keep doing what you've been doing, you know, they're, they're, they're not very worried about me, but I'm not a very big operation either. You know, if I, if I started making thousands upon thousands, upon thousands of dollars doing this, you know, then they might have a different look at it. and I did tell them that, I am fortunate enough to be able to use, a commercial kitchen for a lot of what I do so they told me to, Keep doing what I'm doing, you know, I'm small potatoes. And as one health department worker told me, there's not a lot that can go wrong with a cake.

**David Crabill:** [00:33:25] Yeah. No, and it's unfortunate somebody who's so well-meaning as you, I mean, you've done as much as probably anybody to try to make, make the home business work from a legal standpoint. But, um, it's just unfortunate, somebody like you, who wants to do things legally can't. Where there are a lot of people out there that they just don't care.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:33:49] And that's the sad truth too. I, from a personal standpoint, I think that, if Illinois were to make, you know, make a set rule across the board, across the state, that they should require insurance and they should require that people take the, food handlers class, the safety class. I think, I think that should be required. I think that's the minimum that we should be offering our customers.

**David Crabill:** [00:34:17] And what, can you talk a little bit about insurance, what that costs you and how did you get it?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:34:22] let's see. I think it's what is it? Snap maybe? And it's, uh, I believe it's \$300 a year

**David Crabill:** [00:34:29] Is it FLIP?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:34:30] yes, that's it. Thank you. That is exactly what it is. And, um, you know, and it covers me. but I think that's the least we can offer. And a lot of venues require it. So you might end up having to do it anyway. but I think that's the, you know, and then charge a licensing fee. I don't know if you've heard, but Illinois is broke.

We have less than no money. and, you know, so hit us up for licensing fee. You know, I'll give you a hundred bucks a year for this, you know, but just give us an across the board law for everybody, not where, you know, it depends on where you live.

**David Crabill:** [00:35:08] Yeah, it's, it's pretty unfortunate. And fortunately, it's very rare these days for a state not to allow basic baked goods from home to be sold, statewide.

They're not too many States anymore that don't have a statewide law that accommodates that.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:35:26] Right. Right. and, and once, once we're past this COVID nonsense, not that I think it's nonsense, it absolutely is not nonsense. but once, but once we're through the pandemic, you know, I'm going to be getting in touch again with my state Senator and, and our state representatives, and sitting down with them and talking with them, you know, coming armed with, with cupcakes.

One of my big plan several years ago was to have a whole bunch of Illinois bakers hit the capital building in Springfield, bringing our, Our baked goods, you know, you stop and, see your Senator stop and see your representatives, bring them a cake, bring them cupcakes, bring them cookies, bring them whatever it is you do, and, and let's, you know, sweetened the pot up a little bit for them.

And hopefully they will take the least restrictive rules in the state and apply those across the board, you know, hopefully, you know, reasonable, cottage laws across the state of Illinois equal for everybody.

**David Crabill:** [00:36:30] Yeah. Unfortunately what Illinois actually has to do. Some States do this and some States don't, but what they have to do with their law is they have to write into the law a line that says that counties cannot ban these operations, like the state has to write that into their law and say that counties can't override it.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:36:50] Right. Well, my plan is to, because it's been quite awhile now that that a lot of our surrounding States have had, have had, these laws in place. And I can go in there with actual ammunition and say, look what they're doing here. Look what they're doing here. Look what they're doing here. you know, there have been no issues with, public safety, you know, and, and, getting my ducks in a row so that when I go in I can present this and show them that, I'm not asking for the world here.

**David Crabill:** [00:37:25] And it's, I don't know what it is about central, Northern United States, but it's, you're right near, Wisconsin and Minnesota, they both had a lawsuit to, uh, get things moving in their state, so that might be what it takes for Illinois to get something moving.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:37:44] And, and that might be, that might be. My husband is a lawyer, and maybe, you know, he's talking about retirement. Maybe I'll give him something to occupy his time.

**David Crabill:** [00:37:54] so what kind of person do you think should start a cottage food business?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:38:01] well you better love what you're doing because, It can be difficult dealing with people. 99 and a half percent of the people I've ever dealt with have been wonderful. there've been a couple of difficult ones, but you know, that's to be understood in any business.

So you better love what you're doing. take the time to learn about what you're doing. You know, there's, there's a lot out there. There's tutorials everywhere. join your local, cake clubs and, ICC international exploration of cake, society. Join them. that is money well spent, for 60 bucks a year or something like that. Um, you can go to, meetings every, you know, two to four meetings a year, where there's demonstrations and, and hands on classes. it's truly, a magnificent resource. you can find classes online, a YouTube, although I'd be careful with YouTube, because you know, any Tom, Dick, & Harry can put up a YouTube and you don't know if you're watching one that's, you know, is with somebody who really knows what they're talking about or, you know, just picked up the rolling pin last week and now they think they're an expert, you know?

So I would be careful with YouTube, but there are so many resources out there. There's books, there's magazines, cake shows are everywhere nowadays, and, and avail yourself of those, to learn, so that you can offer something special, to your potential customers. you want to be a step above what your local grocery store can provide.

And it's not that there aren't good decorators in the grocery stores. There are, but a lot of times they're hobbled by how fast they need to knock these things out. You know, they can't take a little extra time. They can't do that extra little bit. so, you know, they might be, you know, strapped by their own rules and regulations where they work.

but, but take the time to learn and, um, love what you're doing, love the creativity of it. and understand that it's hard. it's hard to make money at it. You know, a lot of people still think, you know, you want that much money for flour, sugar, and eggs? You know, with, without understanding. Sometimes you have to educate your customer, you know, and say, you know, it is going, you know, it, it could cost me, eight full hours to make your cake, and I cannot do that for \$50. You know, I can't even buy the ingredients for \$50. Have you priced vanilla lately? You know, so some, you know, you have to be, you have to be willing to nicely educate your customers. You have to be willing to work with your customers, understanding that, They might have, ideas of grandeur, but not a pocket book to match.

A Baker I know who, who does have a, an actual bakery. He has a sign in his bakery that says, Pinterest equals pricey. And it's right. You know, they go on Pinterest, they see this stuff. Um, you know, so you just have to be willing to work with your customers and for God sake, know what it's costing you so you're not taking a beating on it. Don't lose money on it. You'll burn out.

And, uh, we are our own worst critics. Step, six feet away and see what you see and you will see what other people see. You will not be laser focused on that one tiny little thing. Um, but as, as decorators, we all do it. We are our own harshest critics. and that's good advice I got from the best cake decorator I know.

So if this is what you really want to do, Go ahead and do it. And if you're being successful at home, and you're thinking about maybe opening a storefront, do a whole lot of research before you do that, because now you're talking real money and, it's very difficult to make that work.

So if you're, if you're ready to make the next step, really research that first. but you know, for, for your cottage food people, you know, who are you, who you are reaching, that, that's what I would say, love what you're doing, know what you're doing, educate yourself and, educate your customers.

**David Crabill:** [00:42:25] And why do you love running your business?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:42:30] I love the creativity. I like to feed people. I like to make them happy. I like, I like to see them smile when they, when they bite into it and it tastes good. or to be, you know, awestruck when they see their wedding cake. I, I like being a part of everybody's special day. It gives me a chance to be a part of so many special days. And, and I like that. I'm a people person and the creativity, the creativity is for me.

**David Crabill:** [00:43:02] Very nice. Well, thanks so much for coming on the podcast today. If people wanted to reach out to you, probably someone in Illinois wanted to reach out to you, how would they contact you?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:43:15] Email me. [cakedujour@comcast.net](mailto:cakedujour@comcast.net). And I will, I will answer.

**David Crabill:** [00:43:26] And how do you spell that?

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:43:28] C A K E D U J O U R And if they want to see my [Facebook page, it is Cake Du Jour](#), three words, all capitalized, the C the D and the J and they can, they can see my work there, but if you want to get in touch with me, use my email address.

**David Crabill:** [00:43:50] Perfect. And I'll include a [link to your Facebook page](#) in the show notes for this episode. Well, thank you very much, Kathy, for coming on. It's been a pleasure.

**Kathy Cherie:** [00:44:00] Thank you very much for asking me. I've enjoyed it very much.

**David Crabill:** [00:44:05] That wraps up another episode of the Forrager podcast. I really admire all of Kathy's efforts to keep advocating for a good cottage food law in Illinois so that future generations of well-meaning bakers don't struggle with the challenges she's had to deal with.

If you live in Illinois, please note that you might be able to [start a home bakery legally](#), depending on what County you live in.

To learn more about that law or any of the state cottage food laws, [head on over to forrager.com](#).

For more information about this episode, go to [forrager.com/podcast/13](https://forrager.com/podcast/13). Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.