

# Engineering A Successful Home Cakery & Food Truck with Patricia Bedford

**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 Patricia Bedford.

Patricia lives in Pflugerville, Texas, and mainly sells cupcakes and cakes with her cottage food business, [Suga's Cakery](#). Patricia actually has an engineering degree and worked as an engineer for 10 years before she completely changed course and started her home bakery. She has gained quite a following over the past five years and she is now in the process of building a food truck to expand her business to meet customer demand.

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

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:00:43] Thank you so much. Nice to be here, David.

**David Crabill:** [00:00:46] So Patricia, can you take us back to the beginning when you got started with this business. How did you get into this?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:00:54] Okay. So, um, it really didn't start off as a business initially. My grandma passed away. Her name was Suga. You know, her actual, her, her birth name was Josephine but we called her Suga. And so, Yeah, I just started baking as a way to bring the family together because she would bake and cook for the family. She was the hub of the family. So I wanted to kind of take over that role for her. And so I started baking for birthdays and holidays and things like that. And, um, decided to take decorating classes to, try to ensure that my cakes looked as good as I knew they tasted. After a while people were like, well, you got to stop giving your cakes away. They look too pretty and they taste too good. And so, you know, it took a prodding for about a couple of years. Cause I, like I said, I didn't intend to start a business at the beginning. It was just some more of a way to keep my family together.

But yeah. So a couple of years in October, 2014, I sat down one night and I made business cards and a website and got my food handlers permit. So that I could be a cottage, Texas cottage law, food Baker, or producer in Texas. So that's how it started.

**David Crabill:** [00:02:07] Yeah so you started fairly organically. You already had a lot of people asking you to start charging. Did that translate when you started your business, did you get quite a bit of sales when you got started or was it a pretty slow start?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:02:22] I had quite a bit of sales when I first started, you know, but then I, I started here in Austin, but then I relocated to Dallas for work. Cause remember I was still working as an engineer. And so it kind of slowed things down cause I relocated to Dallas and, and so I had to kind of build a customer base there.

And then I ended up coming back to Austin for another position in engineering. And then, so I had to kind of reignite my customer base in Austin, you know? And so, yeah, so, yeah, but,

but I found it was kind of easier to, to, uh, build a customer base back in my hometown of Austin, or in Pflugerville rather because I knew a lot of people, you know what I mean? There was a, it was easier to develop word of mouth and everything and have access to resources to help me build my business.

**David Crabill:** [00:03:13] So when you started your business, were you actually still doing an engineering job? You did your job for a number of years before going full time into the business?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:03:26] Correct? Correct. So, yeah, I was still an engineer, a full time engineer while I was doing, my business kind of, you know, on the side. So moonlighting, if you will.

**David Crabill:** [00:03:35] That's kind of an amazing transition. Cause I mean, that's a big jump, right? From engineering to being a home Baker. Did it, does it seem like a seamless transition? Is there anything in your engineering background, that helps you with your, your food business.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:03:56] Hmm... processes. Like you have to be analytical, you know, I feel like I have to be analytical and be kind of process oriented, especially when I get a lot of orders, you know? kind of that project management, you know, side of engineering and being, process oriented, I use that. I do.

Probably shooting troubleshooting as well. You know what I mean? So like, if a cake comes out flat or something, you know what I mean? I have to think back, okay, what could I do to, to, to make this right? You know, what, what do I, what do I fix? What are tinker we have to try to, to fix, you know, the moisture of the cake or the density of the cake, things like that, you know, just trouble, general troubleshooting.

**David Crabill:** [00:04:36] Yeah. And do you, I noticed you do a variety of different products as well with, with different recipes. It seems like you're always experimenting with new recipes. Is that your engineering background too?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:04:50] Yeah. Yeah. I think my natural knack to want to, Expand and not be afraid to be creative. You know what I mean? And try to use, use what I have, you know, to do different things.

**David Crabill:** [00:05:06] What kind of things are you creating or constantly working on in the kitchen?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:05:12] well, first and foremost, like maybe like designs for cakes, not being afraid to, you know, be creative with my designs, you know, how I decorate. And then two, recipes of course, you know, cause I started doing vegan and keto and paleo, and that's where the science of baking really gets involved.

**David Crabill:** [00:05:34] Yeah. I noticed that you have a secret menu. Is that what you're referring to with the secret menu?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:05:42] No no no no. So the menu, the secret menu, it's just stuff that I don't advertise that I do that gets into more like full bakery type stuff. You know, like pound cakes and, what else is on my secret menu? just flavors that I don't generally offer to the general public, but if somebody asked me about it, I will do it.

So, but no, I try to publicize the vegan, the gluten free, the keto and the paleo. You know what I mean? So that, um, my, uh, customers with allergies and dietary restrictions can enjoy some suga

**David Crabill:** [00:06:13] Yeah. So what are you currently selling in your business?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:06:18] So I'm currently selling primarily cakes and then I do cupcakes when I do events and that's really where I became most popular because I would do events around town. But yeah.

**David Crabill:** [00:06:31] okay. So how long were you running your business on the side before you decided to take it full time?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:06:40] About three years.

**David Crabill:** [00:06:42] And when did you know that you were ready?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:06:47] I guess when I just, my mind just became so preoccupied with my business, That's when I knew, I kind of knew, I was like, yeah, I probably need to do this full time because I'm just really , that's where my mind is, that's where my passion is. I just realized I had a passion for it, you know? Yeah. At about the, I guess it's about two or three years in. That's when I started to realize that I wanted to eventually make that transition.

**David Crabill:** [00:07:14] How did you end up transitioning from your job to your full time business?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:07:21] So I was actually laid off from my corporate job after a big merger acquisition from the company that I worked with. And so that's how I transitioned. I just saw it not as a negative thing, but as a, as a, an opportunity, a window of opportunity to go to my business full time. So, you know, yeah, so that, that's what it was. It was just a window of opportunity. So I took it.

**David Crabill:** [00:07:46] So, you've, you've become pretty successful over the course of the past five years of running this business. What, what is your customer base like today? Like how often are you in the kitchen? How often are you running events? How often are you doing custom cakes or, or custom items?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:08:07] I am in the kitchen literally every day. it used to be when I first got started full time, you know, there were, I would go days or maybe even a week without, uh, baking, you know, or having an order. but now I am, I am baking just about every day. There's always something. Because I've been able to improve my online presence pretty significantly. So people find me on Facebook, Google, Yelp, all these different places and they order from me. So, yeah, I'm pretty busy these days, which is why, which, which is leading to the expansion.

**David Crabill:** [00:08:43] Was that intentional? Did you start advertising on Facebook, more focused, more on that or has that just happened organically?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:08:53] well, yeah, no, no, no, I didn't. I haven't really been advertising on Facebook. I mean, I did at the beginning a little bit, just, you know, I just wanted to get more exposure through Facebook. But I actually stopped advertising on Facebook and just really, focused on, building my online presence online in general through Google.

Really. yeah, so I started, I [created a Google my business page](#) and which is just, you know, the little page that comes up when you try to find a Baker in there or something in the area, you know, And I started following up with customers and getting reviews, you know, feedback on what was, how their experience was, with the bakery, you know, with, with my bakery.

So, um, with that , people began to find me online. And that's where I would say about 90% of my business comes from. It's from people finding me online that way. um, and that's how that's how I've been able to grow my business pretty organically actually. Yeah. Without, without a lot of, without really doing any ads.

**David Crabill:** [00:09:52] Yeah, No that's definitely cool to hear that you. Did the Google, my business thing, and then that's been helpful. And I actually didn't mean to say advertising. I really just meant to say posting on Facebook to try to kind of increase engagement. but it's interesting to hear that you tried Facebook ads and it sounds like that didn't work very well. Can you talk a little more about that?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:10:14] Sure. Sure. Yeah. So back to the posting. Yeah. Posting on Facebook really works for me. That does drive traffic and gets me more customers. the, the advertising I did do on Facebook, which wasn't really advertising cause I wasn't creating ads per se. I was just boosting a post, which is where you just go and you pay, pay a few dollars, like five bucks to, Show, most more people see your, um, your posts, but that I realized that if I really wanted to advertise on Facebook I would need to, you know, spend a little bit more money or more time creating an actual ad. but with me being on Facebook anyway, and having a, you know, a following, you know, and, and being here in my hometown, you know, the main Austin metroplex, I just started posting my cakes more.

You know, and on my personal page and my, and really crafting my personal page, my brand on my personal page, towards the business. And I have a business page as well on Facebook. So I post on both pages. And then I got into groups like foodie groups, you know, and I start posting my work on there. And that's what began to drive traffic organically, not through spending money on ads.

**David Crabill:** [00:11:23] Very nice. Yeah. You see, seem, you seem a lot more intentional about the ways that you're kind of boosting your presence online. Have you tried Instagram as well?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:11:34] Oh, for sure. Yes. I forgot to tell you about that one I, yeah, I have an Instagram following as well. uh, that I've organically, you know, grown as well. So I post there, yeah.

**David Crabill:** [00:11:45] Have you noticed that they're, like one works better than the other? Does Facebook work better than Instagram or vice versa?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:11:53] You know what I've seen that Facebook works a little bit better than Instagram for me, but now Instagram is, is recently has started, catching up with Facebook or getting close or to Facebook. I wouldn't even say catching up. It's it's, it's starting to work a little bit. I'm starting to get more orders from Instagram, but Facebook is definitely the place where I'm getting more orders if we compare the two.

**David Crabill:** [00:12:16] And do you post your products directly on there? Like, can people buy your products through Facebook or through Instagram?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:12:23] No, they can't buy them through there, but they can order. They can definitely order, like, cause I don't, I don't post links to, click here to buy, you know, or anything like that. I just posted the product and, you know, and people, people see it and they get excited about it and they, they, you know, they send me a question or inquiry for an order. And then I, yeah, I, I take over the order process that way.

**David Crabill:** [00:12:47] Okay. So you're measuring the engagement by just where people contact you.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:12:52] Yeah. Where are people contacting me and the engagement on how many people are liking the post and you know, that kind of thing.

**David Crabill:** [00:13:01] Is there anything else that you've focused on and trying to, it seems like you've tried a variety of different strategies. Are you, are you focused on anything else or is there anything else you'd like to try, like Pinterest or something?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:13:17] Let me think. No, I think I found my niche, actually. It was the Google my business and the Facebook and the Instagram posts. I really feel like I found my niche there, you know? And oh oh oh, there's one more thing. I forgot. So what kind of goes hand in hand with the Google my business is having a website.

So, yeah. Updating that website and posting pictures to that website and, you know, generating content, you know, for that website or fresh content for that website has really helped my online presence as far as like being, pulled up a lot further in the ranks, but I rank higher than other bakeries, which is called search engine optimization, just knowing like, you know, what to do to be pushed up in the rankings on Google. So that's one thing that I, which is a big part of, me being contacted on Google.

**David Crabill:** [00:14:13] So are you creating like blog posts on your website on a consistent basis?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:14:18] No, not blog posts, just posting my work. That's it. Posting my work, and then if I'm going to be at an event, I post the event on there, on my events tab. but yeah, or if I, if, if my offerings change, like if I have a new flavor, I'll post that, you know, or if I do a seasonal flavor, I'll post that. Just, it ends up the, the edits that I'm making are minor. They're not major things, they're not major overhauls, like a blog post or anything like

that. But if some type of media comes out like, um, you know, like this podcast I'll post the link to that, you know? cause Google sees that as content creation. so like, yeah. Yeah. That's, that's how it works.

**David Crabill:** [00:14:58] Yeah. And so have you, checked your analytics or, have you looked at like Pflugerville bakery and looked at that search term? Like how highly are you ranked to be getting this kind of attention?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:15:08] Oh, yeah. I track that very often. So I go incognito on my, my tabs, you know, because I want the search engine to see me as, you know, maybe in a different, not a different location, but when you go incognito, I think that's what I think that's what happens. it just does a general search.

So anyways, I searched for myself, right. Or search for cupcakes in the area or bakery near me, or, you know, that kind of thing. and I rank at the top for a lot of those search terms, above and beyond places that have brick and mortars.

**David Crabill:** [00:15:45] Nice. Yeah. I mean, I could only imagine that that's due to either your popularity in the area or just through all the effort you're putting into your social media presence.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:15:58] Yeah, I really believe it's probably a combination of both, but more so the, um, the, the effort I'm putting into my online presence on my website and my social media.

**David Crabill:** [00:16:09] I feel like I, I saw something too, where you said that you have more Yelp reviews than any other bakery in the area. Is that true?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:16:18] No, no, no, not Yelp reviews. I would say, Google

**David Crabill:** [00:16:21] Google reviews. Okay.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:16:23] Well I would say more five star reviews, more five star reviews to be specific.

**David Crabill:** [00:16:29] Do you know how many reviews you have?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:16:31] I have about 150 reviews right now.

**David Crabill:** [00:16:35] Yeah, that's pretty good. Um, do you do anything to, encourage people to leave a review?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:16:44] I asked them. I still please just follow up and ask. Not everybody takes the time to go back and do the review. You know what I'm saying? Just for whatever reason, you know, they're, they get busy or whatever, you know, you know, typically when I know that it has been a great experience for me and the customer, you know, I just follow up, just follow through and just say, Hey, you know, how was your experience?

And, you know, would you mind just putting that out there, by rating me on Google? So, you know, most customers are so excited about, you know, their experience and the product they received, they, they oblige.

**David Crabill:** [00:17:22] Yeah, that's really, really Good information. Um, I just wanted to steer back towards your actual product. Um, what kind of custom cakes are you specializing in? Like, um, how, how custom designed are these products and what do you typically charge for them?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:17:44] The custom designs. what I define as customers, anything that requires like use of fondant or, you know, piping techniques or, You know, any other medium like edible image paper, or, you know, just any other medium that I am using to decorate the cake, uh, or anything that I used to be more creative on the design of the cake.

And typically people want an eight inch round cake. That is the standard. Most customers are ordering that for their custom cakes. So I just really work around it. A very popular trend are drip cakes, like the chocolate the white chocolate drip cakes, where you color the chocolate, you know, whatever color they like and you drip it on the sides of the cake and it, you know, that kind of thing.

For those drip cakes, I typically charge like \$75 for an eight inch round. and then, for other custom cakes, It just really depends. Most of my custom cakes since they are just 8 inch rounds. and most of my designs that I do, I consider them to be very, you know, pretty basic for, I don't know, I don't know what it is. I think it's just, you know, I don't know. That's just, I don't know if I've just gotten that much better or just what my customers ask for, but a lot of them are less than a hundred dollars.

**David Crabill:** [00:19:03] Yeah. So you might be selling more cakes that are like a more basic kind of design, but you're selling in a higher quantity of them.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:19:10] Exactly. Mmm hmmm.

**David Crabill:** [00:19:13] And what kind of, like, how long does it take for you to make a cake like that?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:19:20] I would say, give me about four hours from like, literally from start to finish. Everything.

**David Crabill:** [00:19:26] And if you're making multiple cakes at once, do you think you could do like two of the cakes in five hours or is it like four hours each.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:19:34] I could probably do two of the cakes in about four, four and a half hours. So it's really, I could push it if I'm pushing it. I could probably do a cake in about two and a half, three hours. Yeah and baking them all at the same time, you know?

**David Crabill:** [00:19:49] Yeah. How have you, has your pricing changed? I can imagine you weren't selling your cakes for \$75, four years ago.



**Patricia Bedford:** [00:19:57] Oh, no, no. I think I started off selling cake for like \$35. So, yeah, it's definitely changed. When I started, I think my cupcakes were like \$1.50 or something. Maybe \$1.50, \$2, somewhere around there. Now my cakes are \$4 a piece.

**David Crabill:** [00:20:19] Your cupcakes, you mean?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:20:21] Yeah, Oh, sorry. Yeah. Cupcakes. Cupcakes are \$4 a piece. And my cakes are, uh, you know, a little bit towards more of the hundred dollar range.

**David Crabill:** [00:20:31] And your cupcakes, that's, that's a pretty good price. Are they like the larger kind of cupcakes?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:20:37] They're standard size. But what I do is actually fill up the liners. So when they bake up, you get like this huge dome at the top and you're getting more product.

**David Crabill:** [00:20:47] I see. Yeah, that's a pretty good price. And now you do a lot of like keto, vegan, gluten free. Are you charging more for those items?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:20:56] Yeah, for sure. For sure. It's just per item, it's maybe like 30 to 50 cents more per item.

**David Crabill:** [00:21:03] Okay. So not, not a huge markup there. Um, yeah, that's pretty good. I mean, I think \$4 is a, is a very good price. Like, when did you feel comfortable getting to that price? How did you know that it was time to move up into that price range? And was it uncomfortable to do.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:21:23] Sure. Yeah. So like, when I went full time, you know, I had to really look at my costs, my cost of goods, you know, and really make sure that I was pricing myself market-wise and, and at a rate to where that I could sustain myself, because now this was my living, you know what I mean?

It was, it wasn't just a hobby or a side thing. It was, you know, how I make my living. So I really had to really sit down with myself and be like, okay, am I really charging for my time, my efforts, my, my premium ingredients, you know, am I charging what I'm worth? and at a rate that will, you know, pay for everything that, all my expenses, and sustain me financially, you know?

So I did that kind of reevaluation, when I got started doing this full time. And yeah, at the beginning, it was kind of hard cause I was like, well, I'm at that point, I think my cookies were \$3 a piece, you know, And, my average cake, I think was like 50 bucks maybe somewhere around there, but then I was like, nah, after I did the calculation, so my cost of goods, I was like, Hmm.

Yeah, I really gotta be selling it for at least \$4 a serving at least to be, to be making profit. And making enough money to where if I have, you know, so many volumes of cake, 15 to 20 a week, you know that then I can actually live off of this business.



**David Crabill:** [00:22:55] Right. And I'm sure the cupcakeries, the commercial bakeries in the area, they're selling their cupcakes for \$4 each so

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:23:04] They're about \$3.50, \$3.75 for a basic cake. So I'm a little bit over. But, I mean, you know, \$3.75 that's, you know, that's about \$4.

**David Crabill:** [00:23:17] So I think a lot of people, they get worried that when they're going to increase their pricing, that maybe people, customers are going to be annoyed or upset. Did you find any pushback when you increased your prices?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:23:33] No, it was a gradual thing, really. I just, you know, one day I just did it. I mean, yes, I did have, I have had maybe like a number of people I can count one hand and it wasn't, it wasn't old customers, it was new customers. They were like, well, you know, that's too expensive for a cupcake, you know? And like, well, you know, it kind of is what it is.

It's what covers my costs. You know, I have to pass the charge, what it costs. You know what else I'm not going to be in business. So actually it wasn't that hard. It really wasn't that hard. It was just, you know, recognizing that what I need to make, what I need to charge in order to be in business and to, you know, to be able to make money from this business.

**David Crabill:** [00:24:16] Right. Well, and you've certainly done well enough to start to expand your business. I know [you've run a Kickstarter campaign](#). Tell us a little bit about that.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:24:26] Sure. So, I actually purchased a, a food trailer, a 17 foot trailer about a year ago. Right. And, I, you know, I purchased it but I didn't have the money to actually get it on the road because, you know, purchasing it and then, you know, doing the build out and getting all the inspections and the permits, that's like two different things, right. yeah. I have been sitting on this trailer for almost a year and I, and when I got it, I was like, well, how do I get the money to do the build out and get this on the road. Cause while I am profitable in my business, you know I make enough money, you know, just to sustain the business and, you know, kind of pay myself, you know? So there wasn't much wriggle room to, you know, start funding a new venture and pivot the business, right? So, even though I was getting more popular and, and getting more, gaining more business, it was just a last few years after, you know, transitioning to full time. It was just, you know, getting to a point where I could, sustain the business on its own.

So yeah, I decided like, Eight months ago to do a Kickstarter campaign. And I did a lot of research on how to do an effective campaign and, um, you know, what it all it entails and basically it's a massive marketing campaign, you know. It's not just posting a link and a story and saying, please, you know, donate. It's, you know, asking family, friends, colleagues to, to back you in, and, getting them to get behind you on your, your venture, right.

And so, that's what I had to do. I had to come up with a story, not come up with a story, but tell my story in a way that people could read it and understand it in a concise, you know, and tell it a concise manner. And then I had to also, create a video, that displayed what I was doing and why I was doing it and you know, how they're backing would help me how their

donations would help. so yeah, I put all that together. And I started, like I said, I spent a couple of days just calling people and Facebook messaging, my followers and my friends and family, literally a couple of days, it was about a list of a 300 people that I was contacting and asking them if they would, you know, help me with this project to be able to get my trailer on the road.

And so once I got those pledges, the week later, actually, I actually, launched the Kickstarter. And then it was just a matter of people, you know, coming through on their pledges. And that was it. I was able to raise about, cause I, my aim was \$10,000. That's what I, I aimed to, uh, to raise. And I, I was able to raise that in about four days, the campaign lasted 30 days, but I raised what I wanted in about four days.

And it was because I was able to get the pledges before the campaign even launched. And so, Even at that point, once the campaign launched, I still had to follow up with all those people and let them know this is the link. And this is, you know, the campaign is live, if you, if you are still able to donate to back the project. So,

**David Crabill:** [00:27:31] Yeah, no, [I've seen this Kickstarter campaign and it's a legit campaign](#). You have a very professional video. Did you pay for that video?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:27:40] Yeah, I paid a videographer to do it for me.

**David Crabill:** [00:27:43] Yeah, it's a really nice video. Like what do you think you invested in terms of money into this campaign?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:27:50] let me see, like, so the video, the video was a \$500 and, um, so I have customers on the, on the video eating my cupcakes. I wanted to get footage of that. So was it, I had to make about, about 150 cupcakes that I gave to the people who, um, who came out and, uh, you know, enjoyed the cupcakes footage. So that was another investment there.

And then the rest of it really was just time, just time. Writing and making, you know, trying to convey a concise message, you know, that was, that people could understand and relate to, you know,

**David Crabill:** [00:28:28] And you, you kind of undersold yourself, you've made more than \$10,000. What have you made with the campaign so far?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:28:36] So the campaign is, you know, the campaign is over. It ended July 4th and, um, the total was about \$17,196. I believe.

**David Crabill:** [00:28:47] Very impressive. Congratulations on that. That's, that's a very, very amazing, yeah, that's quite a success. And what does that mean to your initiative? You were asking for \$10,000, but was that enough to cover your costs?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:29:04] Yeah. So really I needed a little over \$16,000 to cover my costs. But I was afraid. I wasn't sure. I never done this before. And Kickstarter is all or nothing, meaning that um if you raise the money that you set out to raise, you get the funds, but if you don't, if come up short, you don't get anything, they just refund your backers.

So, to play it on the safe side, I actually did at \$10,000 instead of \$16,000, hoping that I would at least get, if I got at least \$10,000, I would have some money, and then maybe just find a way to get the rest of the money. But, uh, no, I mean, you know the Kickstarter, you know, went past my wildest dreams and I got \$17,000.

**David Crabill:** [00:29:49] And what if you had only gotten, say \$10,000, what would you have done?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:29:54] Well, I'd actually been talking to some friends you know, helping me out with maybe a small loan. So, they would, they said they would have stepped in and, you know, helped me come up with the money for a loan, so that I'd be able to still get her on the road. So, yeah, I still had backing from family and friends on that.

**David Crabill:** [00:30:13] Nice. Well, it's wonderful that you don't have to take a loan now.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:30:17] Right, exactly. That's the thing. I don't have to take that loan. I will be able to do this without that debt. Now, granted, I still owe on the trailer. I did receive a loan on the trailer to buy the actual trailer. So I'm still working on that, but, but as far as getting on the road, I, you know, I don't have any debt on that, so. I figure though I should be able to, uh, get the, uh, the loan for the trailer paid down pretty quickly.

**David Crabill:** [00:30:45] And with Kickstarter, you have to typically, give people something in return for their donation, right. So how did you decide what kind of incentives to offer people?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:30:56] Yeah. So I just looked at other Kickstarters and saw, you know, other successful Kickstarters and just kind of saw what they were, you know, giving. So like typical trend was t-shirts. you know, so of course I was like, I gotta do t-shirts, you know, do some swag, you know? and I know that everybody, a lot of people that, you know, follow me and everything, Typically want a product, So that's a, that's a typical trend for successful Kickstarters that they give away product. So, and I know that people who follow me, they, they will love, you know, free products. So, or I felt like they will love free products. So that's how I decided to do, you know, what to offer as far as, you know, the, rewards is, is a mixture of swag and product.

**David Crabill:** [00:31:45] Are you selling cupcakes or something? Like what, what do people get for donating a certain amount?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:31:51] Yeah. So like for a \$50 donation, I think if I remember correctly, I did like three dozen cupcakes or two dozen cupcakes. Maybe, maybe it was probably two dozen, two dozen cupcakes. Or a dozen. Oh, some amount of cupcakes. I don't even remember. Don't get me lying. it was like a certain amount of cupcakes, And it just kind of increased depending upon how much you gave. I also think I put in there like an apron. a t-shirt depending upon how much you, backed the project. there was for I think for \$300 donation, I actually will be doing a, a baking class, a cupcake decorating and baking class, on my trailer when I open.

And then I think for like the higher ones, like \$1,000 and \$2,000 ones, I think I, they're like, cards for like cupcakes for life and cupcakes for a year. So yeah,

**David Crabill:** [00:32:44] So, how did you decide to go the food truck route, right? Cause a lot of people will open up a commercial bakery shop like a brick and mortar. Why did you think you would want to do a food truck?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:33:00] Sure. So. I felt like trying to open up or go from a home bakery to a brick and mortar, would be more, a bit more difficult because of the overhead for commercial space. You know what I mean? Typically commercial space, you know, you have to pay thousands of dollars in rent per month, and with me being at the stage of growth, I thought that a trailer would be a nice next step. Instead of jumping into a commercial space that required, you know, thousands of dollars in rent per month, So I thought that a trailer would be the next step because it has a lot lower overhead.

**David Crabill:** [00:33:38] you're just getting started with this. I don't think you've actually launched the food truck yet. Like, do you feel like it's a little bit of a risk? Like, do you wonder if you're going to make, be able to make that jump from your current home business to, funding and running a different type of business, like a food truck business?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:33:57] Yeah. With any pivot, I think in a, in a business, there was a little bit of a risk that exists, but I'm more on the optimistic side of that because I feel like I'm going to be doing the same thing I did at home. Except now I'll just have a place where people can come and pick up their onesie, twosie cupcakes.

Cause typically my minimum order on my, on my website is 24 cupcakes. Right. Because I make everything in batches and I don't have like a brick and mortar or a storefront for people to come every day and buy them. So I have to make them in batches and stuff because I want them to be fresh. And not that they won't be fresh, you know, when I get into my trailer, but I can make a bunch of cupcakes and, you know, have people come by on a daily basis to pick those up and eat them, you know? So, so yeah, like I said, I feel like it's just an extension of what I'm doing already. So I'm really optimistic about it.

**David Crabill:** [00:34:50] Is your plan to set up your food truck in one specific place? Or are you planning on moving it around and like texting people or sending out a message on Facebook announcing where you are that day?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:35:02] Yeah. So this acts as a brick and mortar, meaning it will be a permanent location. So I won't, I won't be moving the trailer around. It'll be like my brick and mortar that people can visit and know where I am. You know, when I'm open.

**David Crabill:** [00:35:16] And how did you determine a location or what was the permitting like, or what is the permitting process like for that?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:35:24] Yeah. Sure. So I have been thinking about this food trailer situation for a little while, right? For like, I would say since even before I left corporate America, And, um, I had been scoping out places to put my trailer since then. And I came across this place couple years ago, two, three years ago, and I was like that would be a

fantastic place, it's kind of an empty grassy lot between a church and a Mexican restaurant here in Pflugerville, in downtown Pflugerville. And I was like, man that'd be an excellent spot because it's you know, right off the main, one of the main arteries in the city in downtown Pflugerville, lots of people who want to go in and go out and get to other cities come by or pass by this lot, and you know, this street to get in and out of the city. So that'd be a perfect spot. So I did a research on how much it costs to be there or to purchase the land or who owned it, or, you know, trying to figure out how to get there. And the land was like a few millions of dollars, to purchase that land.

So I was like, well, I'll hang that up. That's not going to work. But long story short, I ended up, Getting in contact with the new owner of the land that, that wasn't the owner a couple of years ago, the new owner of the land. And they actually, wanted to start a food truck park on the land, just so as it happens. So I was blessed, will be able to put my trailer there.

**David Crabill:** [00:36:47] So are they charging you rent to be there, I assume?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:36:50] Yes, yes, they will. they're gonna start charging me rent once I open up.

**David Crabill:** [00:36:55] And what are they going to be charging?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:36:59] Yeah, I'm not really sure. It was like, I was told that it would be like a hundred dollars a month, which is peanuts. because it's a new thing and the owner's not supplying any water any electricity any marketing any advertising any signage. Nothing. Just the lot.

So that's why it's so cheap. We're in charge of basically getting all that stuff together for our trailers, because it's me and like two or three other trailers that are going to be there. So we have to do all of that. I think it may increase, uh, we may, we may end up paying the owner more, just as we start, you know, getting in business and start selling more, you know, selling to the public, you know, just to help the owner out, cause she's helping us out, you know

**David Crabill:** [00:37:43] Yeah and that might be a good win-win where you're actually Able to jumpstart their business too, and bring a lot of your current customer base to this lot and maybe establish their own business as well.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:37:55] For sure for sure. Yeah.

**David Crabill:** [00:37:58] Now, what is it taking to get this food truck equipped? Like if somebody is interested in starting a food truck, what do they need to think about? Like you purchased this generic food truck, but I don't know if it was a baking truck. Like what, what are you having to actually invest in this piece of equipment?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:38:16] Okay yeah that's a good question. So like I had been looking for a trailer since I guess, after I got laid off in 2018. So maybe about the summer of 2018, maybe may June, 2018 is when I started looking for a trailer. a lot of food trailers they're designed for frying foods and making hamburgers.

So they have flat top griddles and frying mechanisms, you know, but I was specifically looking for one that was crafted to be a bakery, which is really hard because most like I said, most, food trailers these days, they don't, you know, they're not, they're just not there. You know, they're usually making pizzas or some type of fried food or whatever.

So, I searched high and low. I searched all over the country you know, online to try to find one that, uh, you know, had been already built for being a bakery. And I found one right here at home in Austin. Um, It came with, it was already electrically outfitted. So it had outlets and power and lights. Well not power, but lights and, uh, you know, a triple sink and a handwashing sink.

Because the lady that, um, sold it to me was going to use it to bake. But she changed her mind. She was going to retire. She was, you know, decided, well, I don't want to work that hard. I'm going to sell it. And so, that's how I happened to come across it. So yeah. So if I, if I wasn't able to find one then I would have just by an empty one, an outfit it myself. But I just felt like I was going to be able to find one, you know,

**David Crabill:** [00:39:52] And this is a 17 foot trailer. I mean, what did that cost to get that used trailer?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:40:01] I think it was listed around \$16,000. I was able to negotiate it to \$7,000.

**David Crabill:** [00:40:07] Okay. Wow. Yeah. So a pretty significant investment, but still nothing compared to doing a brick and mortar.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:40:14] Exactly. Exactly.

**David Crabill:** [00:40:17] And also you're going to be able to move beyond the limitations of the Texas cottage food law by doing this, um, right. You're able to sell other kinds of items. So what, what sort of things are you going to be able to sell once you are not using your home kitchen anymore?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:40:36] I have a lot of requests for tres leches cake. So, I will start making that. let's see, what else would I make? I'll start making banana pudding, but these are things that have to be refrigerated, you know, and under the cottage law, you can't sell them because they have to be refrigerated. So, yeah. I'll sell that, I'll sell beverages, maybe even dabble in a little cheesecake too, you know?

**David Crabill:** [00:40:58] Yeah, no it's a very exciting Move for your business. And, I wish you all the best as you explore that. I know it's a lot of work, but it's very cool to see. I mean, you have a lot of customer base already and I'm sure it'll be very successful.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:41:13] Yeah thank you.

**David Crabill:** [00:41:15] So Patricia, we've been talking for a little while. Um, but before we jump off, I just wanted to ask why you love running your cottage food business.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:41:25] I love to serve. I love to make people happy, you know, with my offerings. That's why I love it. I love to see people's expression when they get their custom cake or their cupcakes, or, you know, after they've eaten, you know, my product. It's a very fulfilling thing for me. So I get a lot of fulfillment out of that. And that's why I do it.

**David Crabill:** [00:41:45] And I did actually want to ask, I know that you did this business kind of in memory of your grandma Suga. Are you actually using any of her recipes or is it just, in her name only?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:41:59] Yeah. So it's really in her name only. When she passed, I believe I was about 18, 19 years old and, You know, I didn't have a chance to write them down, down or uh, you know, anything like that. So she taught me a lot because I watched her make cakes. That's all the care that she put into making the cakes, through tasting all the ingredients and, you know, being diligent about checking the cake, so it wasn't over baked and everything like that. So that's what I take from her.

**David Crabill:** [00:42:30] Well thanks so much, Patricia. Where can people find you and get in touch.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:42:36] Sure. So, um, they can visit my website [sugascakery.com](http://sugascakery.com), or they can [find me on Facebook](#) under the same name, sugascakery, or [on Instagram](#), sugascakery. And then, about mid to end of August, they can find me at 301 East Pecan Street in Pflugerville.

**David Crabill:** [00:42:58] Um, and I'm just remembering, I always like to ask, are there any stories that you can think of in the past few years that jump out at you as being a particularly memorable experience that have come through running your cake business?

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:43:17] Let me see, there's been so many experiences, you know, Yeah. I delivered this volleyball cake to a lady at, uh, like an arcade, right. She saw the cake and she literally just started, you know, just crying tears of joy. Cause she was like, it was so beautiful and it was just perfect for her daughter. And she was really thankful that I was able to do it for her, you know? So that was a memorable moment, you know, that really touched me

**David Crabill:** [00:43:43] well, thank you so much for coming on the show. It's very exciting to see where your business is headed, and I wish you all the best.

**Patricia Bedford:** [00:43:53] All right. Thank you so much David. I appreciate your time and having me on the show.

**David Crabill:** [00:43:59] That wraps up another episode of the Forrager podcast. I really enjoyed hearing Patricia's journey from engineer to home bakery, to now a food truck, and it was also cool to see how she's leveraged some online marketing strategies to become one of the top ranked bakeries in her city.

If you are thinking about starting a cottage food business, head on over to [forrager.com](http://forrager.com) to check out your state's cottage food law.



For more information about this episode, go to [forrager.com/podcast/14](https://forrager.com/podcast/14). Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.