

# Marketing Cake Art with Jennifer Lopez & Emily Blattel

## - Part 2

**David Crabill:** [00:47:29] 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 continuing with Part Two of my interview with Jennifer Lopez and Emily Blattel, the owners of [The Cake Mom & Co.](#)

If you haven't heard Part One yet, I suggest you go back to the previous episode and listen to that first. You can find that episode at [forrager.com/podcast/15](http://forrager.com/podcast/15). And with that, we'll jump right in to the second half of this interview.

So I want to talk about what people should think about when they're starting their business, because you guys have gotten to the point now where you have some very elaborate cakes and very good skills. And so you're able to do certain things that, other people maybe dream of doing, but what do you recommend for people when they're just getting started? What should they focus on? What's most important?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [00:48:36] Well first off you definitely need to think about your contract because I think that was one of the first things I did was I scoured the internet for different types of contracts and what needed to go in a contract to make sure that when you have that sale, that, you know, if anything goes wrong or if they back out, like, what's your policy on all this type of thing.

And then definitely you need to get half of your money upfront as a retainer. And then a lot of people wait until the day of delivery to get the money. And I would suggest you get it the week before, because you don't

**Emily Blattel:** [00:49:07] Especially a wedding.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [00:49:08] Yes. I usually do two weeks before for a wedding, but a lot of times I've gone to a delivery. I've never had a problem with anyone paying, but it's always that nervousness of, Oh my gosh, what if they don't pay? Or what if they don't show up and then you're stuck with this cake and you don't have all the money for it.

**Emily Blattel:** [00:49:25] Or sometimes the person who ordered it isn't there.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [00:49:30] That's yeah, that's one of the policies for the weddings was what really got that started for me was I showed up to a couple of weddings and there, nobody was around that knew anything about anything about the cake. And they were like, well, I don't know. And I'm like, well, how am I going to get paid? And who's going to sign this contract.

**David Crabill:** [00:49:46] I did notice that you have some very strict policies on your website and probably as you should, maybe they've come from bad experiences. Can you talk a little bit about your policies and, and how they've changed over time?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [00:50:01] Well, I don't know that we've had a lot of bad experiences, but it's, I guess it's from. Yeah, it's preemptive. And it's from probably reading a lot of baking pages and their comments and people that have had bad experiences and think, Oh, I don't want that to happen to me. So I'm going to put this policy in place.

**Emily Blattel:** [00:50:18] Yeah. I mean, cause we we've had, we've had occasions, you know, obviously our, our policy says that we're not going to give you your money back or we're not going to do this, but you know, there are circumstances that we will, like, we're not. We're not robots. Like we understand when people have things that come up and, you know, a wedding was canceled or whatever.

And, especially if it was so early that we didn't have any, anything invested in other than just the date on our calendar. So like, it's, it's more like, like we said, it's a preemptive thing to make sure that we're covered. But, I don't know that we've ever had to actually even do any of it.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [00:50:51] I did one time. I had a bride that I hadn't bought anything yet. I think she'd given me like \$200 down and she called me or emailed me and told me that. Her fiancé had broken up with her and the wedding was canceled and I was like, sure, you can have your money back. Like, I felt so bad for her and I didn't want to keep her money. I thought that was terrible.

**David Crabill:** [00:51:10] Well it's not just the policies. It's like even just the fact that you have minimums on cakes, like \$200 or \$350. I mean, they seem relatively high, but I mean, I'm not a cake expert. So how did you come up with those numbers?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [00:51:27] For sculpted cakes. A lot of times there's a lot of details and things that go into that. So you have to have a base price to start at and then go up from there, depending like if somebody only wants like a 10 serving cake, then it would probably be around \$350. But you know, if you're going to go up and say, you need to serve a hundred people, then it's going to go up from there.

But I had to do base prices to really give people an idea of what we're going to be charging you because a lot of times people come at you with a \$50 budget and you're like, well, that's a three tier cake that's not happening. So I feel like putting those prices out there. So people have an idea in their head

**Emily Blattel:** [00:52:00] A realistic expectation too.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [00:52:02] Yeah, exactly. And there's this like I want to do on our website. I haven't done this yet. I'm like doing it slowly because it takes up so much time to do this, but I want to do this thing where you can do like a premade cake, not really premade, but like pre designed, I guess is the word. So I have this thing set up where you can get certain cupcakes or a certain like a unicorn cake and it's a set price already. So you, you know, you won't be paying \$200, but if you want to \$150 cake, here's an option for you.

**Emily Blattel:** [00:52:32] Whereas if you want something custom, it's probably gonna cost more. I mean, there's a lot of, and this is something else for those people just getting

started. There's a lot of time involved on the front end of just quoting a cake, making sure that, you know, you're giving people a fair and an accurate price. And, you know, if someone comes to you and they don't have a budget, and then you go to all this work, designing a custom cake for them, sketching it out for them, you know, looking at doing research on how to do the different techniques and looking at different tools that you might need.

And then you come back to them and you're like, you know, it's gonna be \$400. And they're like, Oh, well I only want to spend \$75 really. Well, it would be nice to know that.

**David Crabill:** [00:53:09] Can you talk a little bit about the design process? Like what, what does it take to get from, you know, client's first interaction with you or idea to the final design that, you know, they'll be happy with.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [00:53:23] Well on our website, I have a order form area set up. Like at first it was just email us or we used to do Facebook messages and it just got too complicated where you have people messaging you from like five different places. They're calling you. And it was just too much. So now all we do is email. Like I want it written down.

I want to know what you said. So even our voicemail says, please email us or use our contact form. So the contact form to me has been the best thing ever because people put in everything about themselves. They put in what they're looking for. They how many servings, all that, and which area like if they want me or if they want Emily.

And so that kind of narrows it down and that puts it in our email and then we see it and then we can respond to it for them there. And that's usually how that gets started. And then I usually ask them, the next question is, well, do you have any photos of cakes you like, and you know what style, like cause they'll tell you kind of what style they're looking for, but it's helpful to kind of see the style or the colors or what they want.

**Emily Blattel:** [00:54:18] And, and I mean, from there, I usually make sketches and I, I just have like a sketchbook with a pencil and I get things out and I send them snapshots of it and work back and forth from there.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [00:54:29] Yeah. Sometimes I use my iPad and I'll draw sketches, but a lot of times I've found I'll spend like an hour or two working on a sketch and then I'll tell them the price. And then they're like, well, sorry. And then, so I kind of don't do that as much as I used to and people have even told me, maybe you should start charging for sketches, you know, add that into their quote, because if you're going to waste your time and I've had a lot of people even tell me, they'll charge for like a sketch upfront, which I just don't know how you would do that, but I just, sometimes sketches just don't lead to a sale. So

**David Crabill:** [00:55:01] Well, it's similar to cake tasting, right? I mean, you charge for those,

**Jennifer Lopez:** [00:55:05] yeah, I do charge for those.

**David Crabill:** [00:55:08] but this is after the design process or is that really early in the process?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [00:55:14] That's usually fairly early. Cause you gotta have an idea of what they're kind of looking for before. You can even give them a price. Cause I'm not gonna, like, I used to kind of give them a ballpark price and then I was scared to even do that. Cause I don't want somebody to say, well, you told me \$350 and now it's 500, you know, I want them to be like, Just show me what you want.

And then I'll usually very specific, like you want this, this, this, and this, and it's going to look like this and here's your quote.

**Emily Blattel:** [00:55:39] I use the, um, some of my brides would do a cake tasting and we'd use that opportunity to, to actually go into more detail about what they're wanting. so we, it, cause as they're talking and eating it and we talk about the different things that they like. So using it more as a meeting in itself and more of a discussion period, and I might make some sketches while we're doing that tasting as well. and I don't know. Do you still apply the tasting to their full bill, Jennifer?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [00:56:05] No, I don't because it's too much work and it takes my time and I have to find a babysitter. And so I ended up taking, like, I don't do that anymore. And I even started to like, I haven't done it yet, but I have a fee, like if you just want to meet. You don't even want cake, then I'm going to charge you \$25 because I have to find a babysitter.

I have to take an hour out of my day and go meet you. And so it just, you know, you have to kind of think about it in a business aspect and not just be so like bleeding heart, like, Oh, but it's, you know, just this or that. Like you have to really think about it. Like I'm losing money.

Like, when it comes to home bakers, I don't think a lot of times they think of their business in a business way. Like they don't think about it as if they're losing money or making money. They just think, well, I charged \$50 for this. And I, I just don't even understand how people can charge \$50 for a cake.

Cause it costs me about 30 to \$35 just to buy the ingredients. So if I'm buying the board after that and the box, and then I'm baking it and running my oven and using my electricity and driving my car, it's like, that's, you've literally lost money.

**Emily Blattel:** [00:57:05] One thing. And you know, when you're in a lot of the baking, the home baking groups, you know, people always complain about, the bakers who undersell in an area, you know, and they, they don't charge enough and maybe they're good at what they're doing sometimes they're not. But, it's something to think about as a, as a starting out Baker.

Obviously you have to walk that line between, you know, not charging too much if you're just getting started and you're trying to get, Get some practice and get your name out there, but then also charging so little that you're undercutting, not only yourself, but also others who have the same craft because, you're cheapening essentially, if you, if you, if you are underselling everyone by significant amount, then you are cheapening the entire industry, really.

So it's not that we want, you know, That everybody needs to pay \$32 a serving or something, but, you know, make sure that what you're doing is fair for both yourself and the region where you live and, and just do, do some research and think about, and, and, and don't necessarily stick with what you start with.

When we started, you know, we obviously charged less then it was, it was, you know, several years ago, too, but as you get better, make sure that your prices reflect that as well.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [00:58:14] I agree with that.

**David Crabill:** [00:58:18] I just want to ask about you guys partnering in this business and maybe how that has been beneficial. And if it's something you would recommend and maybe how that's been a challenge, if it has at times,

**Emily Blattel:** [00:58:33] yeah, so I started, I started partnering with a local photographer, here in Missouri. Trying to think how long ago it was. It's been, it's been a long time. Probably eight years maybe. At that point, she and I were coworkers. We worked in the same department at the hospital and she was a graphic designer and I was a PR specialist.

And so we were friends, but she was doing photography on the side and I was doing cakes on the side and she had her daughter's first birthday and she was like, I want to do this cake smash session. Can you make me cake? Sure. We'll do that. So we did it and it was super cute and it worked out really well.

She got gorgeous pictures of her daughter. and. I got to do a fun cake, you know, and it was an easy cake and we worked together and collaborated and made it really nice. And she said, you know what? This would be a really fun thing to do, to offer as a, as a special thing to my clients. So she and I have a partnership where.

Whenever somebody, books, a session with her, for a first birthday smash cake session, they automatically get a cake by the cake mom and co, with their session. So, I've, I've actually continued doing this. This is like the main thing that I still do. More than anything else. It's stayed consistent.

Even when I stopped doing, when I stopped taking other orders, I still consistently do these smash cakes. But, uh, she and I she'll text me and say, Hey, we've got this cake smash this day. This is the colors, or this is the theme. And I'll just put something together. So it's, it's very low key because they're not because I'm not working directly with the client.

They don't necessarily have that. They don't get as much say so I guess, so it makes it a little easier on my end, because really we're looking at it as the whole scene for the photography. So a lot of times we don't need those really elaborate cakes. We need it to coordinate well, it needs to coordinate with what the baby's going to wear and it's coordinate with what the background's going to be.

So those kinds of things. So we don't need it to be a super elaborate cake. Um, so I don't even know how many we've probably done over a hundred. I have no idea, lots and lots of them.

**David Crabill:** [01:00:21] I saw some of those pictures online and they look amazing. And as you said, they're very themed and, I don't know if I've seen anything like that before, but what is it like on your end? Like, um, there's minimal interaction with the client. So it's easier, but what are you actually charging for those smash cakes?

**Emily Blattel:** [01:00:41] So I charged her a reduced amount for what my normal smash cakes would be. And actually I was thinking about this the other day I probably need to go up a little bit, because it's been the same price since we started like eight years ago and she's, she's upped her prices and I haven't charged her anymore. But so I charge her.

Those cakes would normally be like, Probably \$45 for it's a small six inch at two layer cake. I charge her usually somewhere between 25 and \$35, depending on because she just includes it in her cost the client. And it was actually back when I was actually trying to get more business, though, it, it turned into several of them that they'd come to me and say, Hey, you did the smash cake for my baby's pictures.

I'd love you to do the birthday cake or whatever it is.

**David Crabill:** [01:01:22] Oh so, it's kind of like an, like an advertising, you know, you're, you're getting them in the door for all future birthdays.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:01:30] exactly. And they've had it, they got to taste it. You know, they got to see what it was. Yeah, so it has been a good one. And like I said, it's fun and she takes really great pictures and she and I have remained good friends anyway. And so if I ever do need like actual photos from a professional photographer for something I can be like, I need you to come take pictures of this cake. So, it has, it has worked out well.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:01:51] haven't you gotten like from wedding cakes, like the baby shower cakes before, like when they have a baby.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:01:56] I have. Yeah. So sometimes having those repeat customers are really, is really a great Testament to someone who really appreciates what you just like in any business, having someone to return is the greatest compliment. So there've been times where, you know, I did a wedding cake and then maybe I'll get the sister-in-law's wedding then for the next wedding, you know, and then it might be a baby shower first birthday from there on, and like families that I've done multiple cakes for them. And that's always special.

**David Crabill:** [01:02:18] Is that something, I mean, I don't know how that partnership started with you and the photographer, but is that something that you think people should maybe pursue, like find a local photographer in your area and pitch this as a way to expand your business?

**Emily Blattel:** [01:02:37] I'd say as long as you like doing, small cakes and don't expect to like, make a lot of money out of them, but you want to grow that network and, um, So again, it's finding that balance between spending time on something and it not being a suck of your time and, and taking up too much time, you know, these take me like maybe an hour to do, and sometimes I bake them in advance, so that can just get them out of the freezer and ice them.

So, you know, it definitely is a good way to get in touch with photographers and, and get in front of people who are looking for cakes, looking who are going to have that potential for an occasion where they need a cake. I mean photographers are really great people to know when you're, when you're in the wedding business, because a lot of times booking a photographer is one of the first things that a bride is going to do.

So, um, I've actually partnered with her and then, there's a local. A local wedding dress boutique that, I put together a book of some of our best wedding cakes and I printed one of those, it's like a Shutterfly book of really nice pictures. And she actually has that in her shop. So when people are, when brides are there trying on their dresses and doing their fittings and things, and they have the opportunity to see that as well.

So looking for those opportunities of people around the wedding industry is a great way to. To make sure that you're, you're top of mind that, you know, these people, and even and really, even beyond that, getting to know the other bakers in your area, because a lot of times we have too much to do. And so there are a few bakers over here, especially that, you know, we're friends.

Like we talk about things we will share if there's a really bad client that nobody wants to work with ever again, we'll tell each other. But, you know, if you're, if you are busy and you have somebody come to you who needs a cake, being able to refer them to another Baker who I trust, who, will do a good job as well.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:04:21] see, I think my experience with the photography thing has been different because I tried to partner with a couple of photographers and I ended up getting one cake from each of them, but I just didn't get anything after that. So mine was a little different. I tried to get it going here, but it just kind of fell flat.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:04:38] Yeah. I think us being friends helped too. And it was something that she was very passionate about too. So that may have made the difference.

**David Crabill:** [01:04:46] Yeah. And you can see the passion in the quality of her photos. like I said, I don't think I've seen anything quite like it.

I was wondering about your partnership between the two of you. And I mean, sometimes they say, don't go into business with your friends or whatever. Like, has there been challenges or has it been smooth sailing? Is it something you'd recommend?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:05:08] I mean, for the most part, we kind of just, if it's a cake for my area, then I'll take it. If it's for hers, she takes it or, you know, but yeah, we don't really. I haven't had any problems. Really. I think it's been fine.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:05:21] It has been. And I think, you know, part of that may just be a Testament to our friendship has been so long and so old. I mean, we are old now, David, we're very old people and we've been friends for 36 years. So

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:05:34] That's true.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:05:36] so knowing, you know, knowing how, how we both react, we've been through things like personally together. So, you know, there've been things that like, You know, Jennifer is, is like, like family to me. So, which obviously can still have issues too. People don't necessarily get along with family and business either.

But I think that is something that we did, we did think about. And we talked about when we first got started and it's mainly just been, you know, being able to have those open conversations when we don't, when we don't agree on something, you know, if we don't agree on how pricing is going to be set, or we don't agree on a certain policy or something, you know just talking through it and trying to understand each other And working through it.

I think. So making sure that our friendship's the most important part of it, not the business.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:06:18] Yeah. And for the most part, I think we have the same vision for like everything. Like when she talks about how we're going to market it or do something for it I'm like, yeah, I was thinking the same thing. So we usually kind of share the same thoughts, I guess, on how we want to do things.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:06:33] Maybe we've just been lucky. I don't know.

**David Crabill:** [01:06:37] Well, it probably helps that you have now kind of a split responsibility considering that you're in different areas. And even before it, I mean, it sounds like. Emily, you really spearheaded the marketing and design front. Right. And, um,

**Emily Blattel:** [01:06:52] Especially early on. Yeah, I would think. And then, um, just because that was something I already did and knew how to do, and then Jennifer has honed those skills as well. She's a very creative person in everything she does. So she's taught herself, not only how to make and decorate cakes but now she's taught herself how to, you know, be a designer and she works designing ads for a publication.

So, you know, like those are things that she has been able to pick up too.

**David Crabill:** [01:07:17] I, I did want to ask you guys about the challenging times in your business. Um, was there a time in the early days when you weren't sure if you wanted to continue running the business and, how do you get through those kinds of moments of doubt?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:07:36] Well, there was this one cake that I thought was my last cake. And I think I was, you know, that was the cake that I baked it and was like, woo. I don't even care what this looks like. And it ended up, you know, it was fine

**Emily Blattel:** [01:07:46] She brought it to my house. That was the one you brought to my house. You were like, this is it. This is the end. No more. We're not doing any more cakes after this.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:07:53] well, there was a wedding cake. Is that the one you're talking about? Okay. Yeah, the cigarillos. Yes. That

**Emily Blattel:** [01:07:59] Oh, no, no, no. I wasn't thinking about that. I was, it was the one that was like an islet lace kind of thing.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:08:03] Oh, yeah, that one was bad. But anyway, no the one I'm thinking of was the chocolate cigarillos and the strawberries on top the shackles. Remember it had the shackles on, Oh my God. I had to make shackles from pipes. And it was because their last name was shackles. And so, but that was going to be my last cake.

Cause I was, I don't remember exactly what was going on at the time, but I was just done. I was like, this is it. I'm done. I think I moved to Tennessee at that point. And I was just done. And then we just started getting all these inquiries and then she sort of took over from there. And then I started doing a few and I would drive them up to Missouri just cause I, you know, and I did a couple in Tennessee, I think, but yeah, I thought I was done, but it wasn't, it just keeps coming back. I let her,

**Emily Blattel:** [01:08:45] You've tried to quit so many times.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:08:46] I've tried to, yes, I have. I've tried to stop. Even when I moved over here, I thought, well, I'm done Kentucky. It's not even legal. I'm done. And then I just kept going and it just won't go away.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:08:56] Because you had to make the law change.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:08:59] I know.

**David Crabill:** [01:09:01] I did want to ask about that. I mean, it's kind of surprising to hear that you were on the fence so much because you took quite a bit of initiative to actually make it legal in Kentucky. Can you talk a little bit about that process?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:09:15] Yes. So I remember I first. Moved over here in 2013, permanently. And when I moved over here, like one of my first things was, well, let me look up the law all and see. And I probably went to Forrager because that's where I always went. And I found out that it wasn't legal unless you were a farmer. And I think I was just, I laid in bed.

I was just devastated. I was like, well, I can't do what I want to do here. I thought, should I even move? Cause you know, I could've stayed in Missouri, but I wanted to be close to my family. So I was just like, well, I guess I'm just going to have to move. And maybe someday somebody will change the law. And I certainly didn't think it was going to be me because there was somebody working on it at the time and I thought she'll get it through.

I'm just going to hope that she gets it through and you know, a few years went by and nothing happened with it and I would follow this Facebook page and. Nothing ever changed with the law. And so in 2017, I think I was searching again. Cause every once in a while I would go check on this page. Well, there was a new page that popped up that was trying to change the law.

I was like, Oh wow. Yeah, maybe they'll do it. So this time I thought, well I'm just going to make a page to support their page. So I made the Kentucky home bakers page. And I literally did not start it to be like the voice of it or the face of it or any of that. I just started it. So I

could maybe share some memes or some links or, you know, just try to get some stuff out there for people to find and ended up getting on the news. I contacted the Institute for justice and they contacted me back and they were like, we want to help you. And I was just amazed because I thought really, so they, I got on the news and did a segment on the news and that helped it, I think it went on the CNN wire and it was seen like all over the country.

And, so then the Institute for justice had a lawyer that helped, write up the bill and then he put it, introduced the bill. And then we went to Frankfurt and I walked around holding the fake cake that we had for one of our photo shoots and, you know, just to get people's attention and we handed out cookies and cupcakes, all the bakers that showed up and talked to different legislators.

And just really, worked on getting the name out there and what we wanted. And also a lot of it too is like I would make photos constantly on my phone, like little pictures and get your voice out there. And I started a website where I, uh, would share the Baker's stories, all these women that wanted, or men that wanted to bake but were stopped.

Like either they were shut down or they, you know, they couldn't do it and just different stories. I just wanted to share their stories so that people would know, that this is an important issue. And there are people out there who want to see this changed.

**David Crabill:** [01:11:47] I remember there were some pretty decent efforts back in 2015 or so. And, that is an indication that there was some significant resistance. So what kind of resistance did you face while you were trying to get this law passed?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:12:02] Well, the biggest resistance we face was representative Hornback who owned a commercial business. So he was really opposed to it because I think he saw it as competition. And I think at one point I thought he was going to end up like halting it all together because I thought he was going to vote against it.

And I can't remember now what happened with his vote, but, No, he didn't, it passed. And so, but then the next year, these farmers were upset because they couldn't sell like dried herbs and certain stuff. And I'm still not really certain how the language messed that up for them. But then I had a couple of them messaging me, angry, like, well, you messed up the law.

And so behind our backs, like nobody told us that they went and changed the law again. So then they added a few regulations onto it. But now you can sell pretty much anything you want. That's like a home based processor type food, like dried herbs and stuff.

**David Crabill:** [01:12:54] is there anything that you would like to see further changed about the current law?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:12:59] yeah, I wish it would go back to how it was when we first introduced it. I like the fact that the only thing I like that they changed was that you could do more foods like to me, that's great. I wish we could do all kinds of foods. Like I think it's Wyoming that has pretty much, you can sell anything. I don't know if that's right.

You probably know that. Okay. Well, like to me, that's amazing. I think that should be everywhere, but like, what I don't like is they put a cap on our sales, I believe it's like \$60,000. And then they also made it to where you have to turn in or home-based registration and a \$50 fee. And so I didn't really like that because before it was more like free, I guess you could say.

**David Crabill:** [01:13:37] why do you think that your efforts panned out, whereas others didn't like, what did you do that, or what did they not do? Like if somebody is trying to start a law or improve the law in their state, what do you think are the essential factors that helped contribute to the successful effort?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:13:54] I think the biggest thing was getting the word out there with social media. You're just, you're not limited. Like you used to be like, you have limitless, like type stuff you can do, you can share and get people to share your stuff. I had a change.org petition that got like thousands of signatures and it got like finally Representative Heath was like, can you please take me off of that, because I keep getting these emails for it. And I was like, okay, well, since you're listening to us now, you know, I'll take you off of it. But you know, just getting the word out there and then finding the support to gather behind you so that all these people are sharing. And then I have these people sharing their stories, and I think that's what was so important was getting that human aspect of it out there so that people see that these are real people that want to see this changed.

It's not just, Oh, they want to bake a cake like there's stories and reasons why they want to bake from home.

**David Crabill:** [01:14:46] There's also the kind of resistance from people. It's like, why me? Right. Like I don't know how to put a bill together or a law together. And I think you kind of fell into that category. So, Um, what would you say to somebody who just doesn't feel comfortable jumping into that whole world of passing bills and laws and stuff?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:15:10] Well I think my really my number one holdup for it was the fact that then I'd have to come out and say, I was basically an illegal Baker, you know? Cause you don't want to draw that attention to yourself and be like, Hey, look at me. And so that was one of my main reasons why. I never wanted to be like real loud about it, but then finally I thought, well, I'm either going to be loud about it, or I'm just done because I can't do this anymore.

You know, I can't hide or, you know, make a cake here and have to take it somewhere else. It was just ridiculous. And I thought I'm just gonna like put my voice out there and say, I want to see this changed. And I think everybody has the power to make a change and. I think my main thing that really kept me going was when I found the Institute for justice, because they call me and they immediately wanted to help me and they set up a plan and, and that really helped a lot because I don't think we could've done it without them because they had the lawyer and they, they showed up and talked in front of, you know, all the senators and legislators and talked to them.

And they even had another meeting. I didn't get to go one of them where they sat in front of them, like at tables and like talked to them. Like before they were voting on it to pass it out of this certain, area so that it would be actually voted on and, you know, just having all that support. And so I think if you feel like you want to change something, then you need to find the support and reach out.

Like I reached out to a bunch of different places and the Institute for justice was the only one that wrote me back. So you really just have to just put your feelers out there and find the right people to help you.

**David Crabill:** [01:16:35] Getting back to the cakes. I did want to ask what you recommend. I mean, I imagine you just have a ton of cake supplies at this point, but What should somebody really focus on when they're trying to get a cake business started, like, what are the essential tools that you would need.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:16:54] I think a turntable for one thing, like for years I used one of those little cheap \$10 ones from hobby lobby. And I finally decided one day I was going to buy one off Amazon. That was like a metal. And the difference was amazing. Cause the other one would just bounce as you would turn it. And so this was like smooth and that helps so much when you're trying to smooth the cake out.

So you need a turntable, you need a good mixer. That's definitely important. I would, I haven't gotten one yet, but I would really like to have two mixing bowls so that when I doing more than one flavor or different icings or whatever, I can just swap it out real quick. And. You know, your spatulas, piping tips, cutters.

Like it's a slow process. Like you can't obviously buy everything at once. It's been years of just building up. Just what I see. Like, you know, sometimes if I see something on sale that I've always wanted to buy, like the other day I bought a marvelous molds knit simpres or whatever. And, you know, I haven't used it yet, but it's now I have it.

And so next time I need it. I've got it. So I just do that every once in a while.

**David Crabill:** [01:17:55] Are there certain styles that you think cater better to beginners like that they should start focusing on and then work their way up to other types of styles.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:18:05] I would think for a beginner really work on. Learning how to smooth your icing and learn those different techniques. Like I think what blew my mind one time is I learned you could flip the cake upside down and that'll help smooth out the top a lot easier. And so just learning different little techniques that are gonna make your life so much easier and like put it in the fridge to kind of chill it so you can put more icing on it and.

Like, I dunno. I started out doing like the Dora the Explorer cake, but then my next cake after that was, I went to the store and bought a 16 inch cake pan and baked this giant cake with fondant on it. And it was hideous by the way, but I did it and that was my first attempt at fondant so I wouldn't say ever limit yourself to any specific type of thing.

Just try it all and test your skills and just work and keep going. And you'll just get better as you go.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:18:53] I took a different course than Jennifer. So I started just like learning how to do the buttercream stuff, which gave us a different direction. So starting out, Jennifer did a lot of the fondant stuff. She preferred to do that and I preferred to do the buttercream cause that's what I was comfortable with. But like she said, don't limit yourself.

But just work on improving what you know, you do, you can do or what you think you can do and practice it and go from there. Another thing back to the tools too, um, don't always limit yourself to cake tools. Sometimes they're more expensive and you can actually get a lot of them are actually based on like clay modeling tools. And there's a same thing. Like, and sometimes they're cheaper. So.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:19:30] Yeah, I do that. I do buy a lot of clay tools on the clay aisle like little cutters and molds and things that shape it. And. You know, different stuff like that.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:19:38] Well and like Timbo says, just use straws.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:19:41] Yeah. You can use straws, aluminum foil. There's all kinds of stuff you can use just like in your kitchen. Yeah.

**David Crabill:** [01:19:48] I did want to ask you guys, I mean, you have a lot of fans on your Facebook page and they think your work is amazing, but, what about you guys? Which people do you look up to and do you think their work is amazing? Or who do you aspire to be?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:20:04] My favorite is Cakes by Timbo. But then I love Natalie Sideserf of Sideserf cakes. She has YouTube videos and this was really helpful for anybody. Who's also a beginner and wants to learn. She has YouTube videos where she'll show you how to make some of her cakes. So she'll have different, you know, steps that she shows in the video.

Sometimes it's a little fast. So you might have to slow it down, but it's helpful to see sometimes how that cake is built so that you can kind of recreate it. Cause a lot of times I think what my hardest thing is, is just seeing the structure in my head. And then once I know that I'm like, Oh, now I can do that.

But like seeing someone actually build it up to the point where it's done is amazing and she's amazing.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:20:42] I'm trying to think. There's several people that I've, I've followed over the years and some of them, the styles have changed. So I don't necessarily. Love the styles then but some of the techniques that they've done and off the top of my head, it would be really hard, but like Liz Merrick, she always has really great stuff. Liz Shim has Eat Cake Be Merry. Somebody I follow on Instagram. I love, I love the, um, #cakelife hashtag on Instagram. I follow that and see all kinds of cool stuff all the time. and there's somebody else that does like this pointillism cakes. They're like these teeny tiny little dots and she covers the entire cake.

I'm trying to remember what her company, her bakery is called, but it's the most amazing thing. And it makes my hand cramped just looking at it, but I love it so much. I'm going to find it in a second. I saw it this morning but it's like pointillism, like it's teeny little, teeny little dots and they make up the whole mosaic covering the entire side of a cake. It's amazing.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:21:35] Is it, it's not Sweet Heather Anne is it. She does like piped embroidery. Like, I love that if you go to Instagram, it's sweetheatheranne, and it's amazing. Like everything looks like it was embroidered onto the cake.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:21:48] I need to look at that one too. I don't know that I follow her.

**David Crabill:** [01:21:52] Well, if you can't figure it out right now, I can, I can always throw it into the show notes. You know, we can find it.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:21:57] I will find it.

**David Crabill:** [01:22:00] We have Emily is on a mission now. I was wondering Jennifer, what the most expensive cake you've done.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:22:11] I think that would have to be there was this wedding cake. I think I already talked about it where I showed up and they all loved, as they were coming through. And I was setting up they loved it. And that was like, well no, that one was actually cheaper the one most expensive one I ever did. There was a \$1,200 order and it was a wedding cake and this giant bicycle that I had to make out of PVC pipes.

And it was like, I'm sure I didn't make any money off of it. After I had like 500 trips to Lowe's to buy all the supplies, but the bike itself wasn't really anything to eat. It was just kind of the topper. And then the cake was like a rock, but. That was, you know, I think I charged like \$600 per cake for that.

**David Crabill:** [01:22:50] What was the theme for the bicycle?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:22:53] The guy just, I think he just liked to mountain bike was his thing. And so she wanted this giant bicycle and I did my best,

**David Crabill:** [01:23:01] So this was a grooms cake.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:23:03] Yeah, this was a grooms cake. And the wedding cake was gorgeous. It was like these little flowers and in between it was like a lace look where there was these little Royal icing lines and it made it look like lace and I loved it. It was like a pale green color.

**David Crabill:** [01:23:16] How often do you,

**Emily Blattel:** [01:23:17] I think

**David Crabill:** [01:23:18] Oh, go ahead, Emily.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:23:19] Oh, I was just say, I think my most expensive was actually not a large cake, but it was like 10 or 12 smaller cakes as for like the whole wedding. And it's

actually one of my, it was one of them we talked about earlier. It was like a whole tablescape and it was decorated beautifully. Each of the cakes was a different flavor and they all had buttercream icing, but in different flavors and they had different textures.

And her table was set up with lots of crystal and metals and in varying height, lots of different like antique, cake stands and candle and candle holders and glasses and things. And it was just absolutely beautiful, but it was probably the most expensive order, even though it wasn't a single cake, because it was in that \$1,500 range.

**David Crabill:** [01:23:57] How often do you have multiple cakes per event? Like you have a brides and a grooms cake. Do a lot of people ordering these higher end cakes do that.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:24:11] I think, yeah, I think a lot of them do but sometimes we'll get orders just for grooms cakes. So it's strange to me, but sometimes people will just go with a different Baker for the wedding, or maybe it's up to the mom of the groom to get the other cake. I'm not really sure, but sometimes. It's like, we don't have both, which I would prefer to do both because you don't want somebody to hate the wedding cake.

And then think that you also made that, you know, you made the grooms cake, but then the wedding cake was gross or something.

**David Crabill:** [01:24:39] and getting back to marketing, Emily I was, or, or Jennifer, I was just wondering between Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest. Have you seen one, that's a clear winner for your business?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:24:51] It sometimes depends. I think, cause like the other day I was in this magazine called Paducah life magazine and they shared my story like on their Instagram page. And so all of a sudden we got all these new people that liked our Instagram, but then they shared it on Facebook and we didn't get hardly, maybe two. So it was like totally night and day, but then sometimes I'll share something on Facebook, like a, a contest that I'll share on Instagram too.

Like to win cupcakes, like just comment type of thing, and we'll get more on Facebook than we do on Instagram. So it just really kind of depends. I think.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:25:23] I think when it translates into actual orders, Facebook is the best. Just because it is more localized just in the nature of what it is. Instagram you can get more notoriety and like Jennifer said, getting more followers very quickly. Once you hit that, if you get into the algorithm and you're able to like, be found quickly for a certain topic and Pinterest, like I said, before we get, we get tons of repins on those, but I don't know that we've ever gotten a cake order, From somebody who found us on Pinterest, because, you know, they may be, you know, in LA or something for all we know.

Whereas Facebook, they're looking at people who are where we are and the people who share it are people who other people know. And so I think when you look at it solely by sales, Facebook is definitely the clear winner there, but, by notoriety, it can be the others as well.

**David Crabill:** [01:26:12] Do you think that's also possibly because Pinterest, a lot of people go onto Pinterest to learn how to make their own cakes.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:26:21] Yes. And even Instagram too. Yeah. For both of those they're, they're so inspirational and instructive, that it's not necessarily someone looking to buy, whereas Facebook has more of that marketplace feel.

**David Crabill:** [01:26:33] You were talking about, you mentioned the cake giveaways that you did, or you ran a competition on your Facebook page. What, what would you recommend for that? Did that work well?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:26:47] I think that is one of the best ways to get people's attention, because then they're gonna, like, you ask them if, to share it and to comment and whatever. And so when they share it, it's like, those are the posts that really get the most attention for us without having to pay any money. And so, you know, you give somebody a couple of cupcakes and then they're sharing your product and then hopefully they'll even tell their friends like, wow, that was a really good cupcake.

So I think that's one of the best ways. So just, you know, here's four cupcakes. You're going to win them, just share this post and like it, or comment something and we'll randomly select a winner. Those are to me my favorite thing to do those are exciting.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:27:22] And they're really no cost to us because a lot of times you can, like she said, you know, giveaway four or a half dozen cupcakes. You can do that while you're making another cake. You usually have extra. Or can make a little bit extra and do something like that. And so then at very little cost, very little overhead to you as the Baker, you get all this extra attention and because it's, it's going to be people who are local to you, and those are the people who you want to get in front of.

it's, it's really a great way to get your name out there. And then also get some more attention.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:27:52] Yeah, one of my favorite contests that I did was I got this idea from a local pizza Facebook. My sister told me about it and what they did was they said, Hey, put your business on here that you work for. And we'll so many cupcakes, we'll bring it to you. So like, I think I made about 12 boxes of cupcakes, maybe a little more.

I can't remember. And so I had all these people commenting their different business and this was a great way to give it to like multiple people at once. So not just one, person's going to win it, but maybe the whole office is going to try your cupcakes. So that's a good way to get your name out there. So like, after so many people, I went down randomly and just would select, okay, I'm going to go to this business.

And I went to the hospital, I went to like a child care center, like different places that I picked. And it was like, to me, that was so much fun.

**David Crabill:** [01:28:38] I also wanted to ask you about the cake competition that you did, and I'm a little surprised that you haven't done more cake competitions. Can you talk a little

bit about that and is that, I mean, that's another way you can get your name out there, right?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:28:53] Yeah, well, I mean, those are kind of more, I guess, in the cake world, it's helpful to get your name out there. Cause then you meet more people like you, and they're more likely to share your stuff. But like, I first went to the Show Me Sweets show one year with my daughter and we saw all these cakes and I thought about like doing the competition then, but I didn't do it cause they didn't really know what to do.

And I thought, wow, these are amazing. So now the next year I went and I decided to make the cakes. My one regret though, is that I didn't make them in advance. Cause I really kind of waited until there was only like a month left. And so I only had a few weeks to work on these cakes and one of them I actually made the night before, like I do this a lot, but made it like the night before I left. And so it was the steak cake. I don't know if you saw the steak with the sweet potato by it.

**David Crabill:** [01:29:37] I did see that you made that the night before and that's just unbelievable to me, because it looks like an amazing and realistic cake. I mean, that's one of the other pictures that what was one of the most notable cakes that I feel like you've done.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:29:53] Yeah, that was my favorite. Like my other one was okay. But once I showed up and put it on the table, that's kind of when I realized I'm not anywhere close to what these people have done, cause some of those cakes were just like mind blowing. There was like water and like dragons and stuff and you're just like, yeah, I'm not winning.

And that was okay. Cause it was like, whatever, this was fun. But I did really want my steak cake to win, I will say, and I was really kind of disappointed when it didn't. Cause I thought it's really good compared to some of the other ones that were there, but the pizza cake one and it was pretty awesome too.

Cause it was like a, a slice of pizza, like lifted up off the tray. Like this lady had made this piece of metal that fit with the cake and it was really cool.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:30:31] But your cake did win something, though.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:30:34] I can't remember. I think it was best of theme or something. Like best use of the theme, like, cause it was the royal table, so it's supposed to be something that like a King would have eaten. And I think I was the only one that kind of made something that like a King would have actually eaten like a steak.

Everybody else made like a pizza or some sushi and stuff. And I thought, well, a King would eat a steak, in my opinion, that's a big piece of meat.

**David Crabill:** [01:30:56] Well, I actually saw that blog post as well, and I saw the pictures of other submissions and in my opinion, yours is one of the best looking of all of them. It's just that I feel like yours was simpler. Like there were more elaborate submissions in terms of the amount of time and that they put into them.

But, um, yeah, you'd put more time into maybe a more elaborate display. You probably very easily could have won.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:31:25] Well, I feel like I'm probably my biggest critic when it comes to my cakes. Like Emily can tell you that, like, I will sit there and stress out and I'm not as bad as I used to be, but I used to freak out and be like, it's not perfect. There's this little thing wrong with it here. You know, like I can't hardly even like hand it off to the customer cause I want it to be like, Perfect before it goes out the door and like I've had to kind of let that go and be like, okay, it's just a cake.

It's not gonna matter if that's not quite perfect right there, but I still try to make it as close to perfect as I can possibly get it.

**David Crabill:** [01:31:57] Well, I, I, um, we've been talking for quite a while now. Um, but before we go, I was just wondering what are your future ambitions, uh, for both of you, what are your future ambitions for this business?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:32:11] Well, we have a lot of ideas on what, like, not even just with our cake business, but we have, you know, I started doing a magazine, actually, an online magazine called all all-purpose bakers back. Like, I think the first issue was in may and I kind of, I'm hoping to do another one in the fall, but I haven't really set a date yet for it.

So like I have other things I want to do that are in the baking world. And we have like an idea for maybe, um,

**Emily Blattel:** [01:32:36] A baking network.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:32:37] Yeah a network database type thing. Yeah. That has to go along with all purpose bakers and like kind of expanding our horizons, not just focused on cake, but maybe stuff that has to do with just the baking world and online and stuff like that.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:32:51] Yeah, we'd really like to be a resource and, and, you know, knowing. Knowing what we know and learning what we've learned over the years and in the context that we've made. You know, I think, obviously we still have a lot to learn too, but I think we have some good insights to share with people, especially those home bakers or those people who are getting started who don't necessarily have, um, a business background or marketing background, um, and being able to help them. To help them grow their business and grow their craft so that they can continue doing what they love to do and continue making creations that are beautiful and delicious is something that we're really passionate about. Even if it's not us personally making those cakes for clients every weekend.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:33:28] I really like when I was doing the homemakers, Kentucky home bakers like all the time, like I did at one point, what was even sharing. Just their creations on my website for that. And I found that just really fun and enjoyable just to share other people's work and be like, look what this person did.

And it was just like, this is gorgeous or these cookies are amazing. And I just enjoy doing that. It's a full time job. So it's kind of hard to constantly do it, but I do enjoy sharing other people's baking stuff, you know?

**Emily Blattel:** [01:33:56] Raising the entire industry, raising it up.

**David Crabill:** [01:34:00] Very cool.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:34:01] And I think as a home Baker, I don't think people should get discouraged if you don't get business right away. Cause it took me when I very first started and nobody knew who I was like, it took months just to get like a real order. So I think you just keep putting yourself out there, word of mouth, you know, let people try samples, just keep putting your name out there and you'll start getting that business.

**David Crabill:** [01:34:22] Well, thank you guys so much for jumping on and, I know. Um, anyone listening to this probably learned a ton from you. Where can people find you and reach out?

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:34:33] Well, we have a website [thecakemom.com](http://thecakemom.com) and we're also on [Facebook](#), [TheCakeMom](#), and we're on [Instagram](#), [thecakemomco](https://www.instagram.com/thecakemomco), on Instagram. And then we're on [Pinterest too. I think it's as thecakemomco](#) there and also on our website, like our, um, photo galleries linked to Pinterest now because it's just easier and it makes the website run a little faster.

**Emily Blattel:** [01:34:55] Yep. So we we'd love to hear from anybody. Any bakers who are, who have thoughts to share or anything that we can help out with. We'd love to chat and we'd love to meet new people. Jennifer mentioned going to Show Me Sweets last year, but you know, it was just really fun to get, to meet other people who do the same thing.

And who are passionate about making beautiful desserts and, and treats for people and getting to know each other and talk and network and share those skills. It's an awesome community to be a part of.

**David Crabill:** [01:35:23] Yeah. Thank you guys again for coming on. It's been a pleasure.

**Jennifer Lopez:** [01:35:30] Thank you for having us.

**David Crabill:** [01:35:33] That wraps up another episode of the Forrager podcast. I am so impressed with the quality of cakes that Jennifer and Emily produce, and I encourage you to check out their photos on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#), as well as [Jennifer's blog posts](#) on [their website](#).

If you are thinking about starting a custom cake business of your own, 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/16](http://forrager.com/podcast/16). Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.