

## 13 Years Old and Already In Business with Lauren Inazu

**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 Lauren Inazu. Lauren lives in St. Louis, Missouri, and sells all sorts of baked goods with her cottage food business, Count It All Joy.

I am really excited to have Lauren on the show today. She is an extra special guest because although her business looks like most startup bakeries, what sets Lauren apart is that she is only 13 years old. And let me tell you, she is a very ambitious 13 year old. I think when I was 13 years old, I'm pretty sure I was just doing well to finish my homework.

Lauren, on the other hand has school homework, extracurricular activities, and Oh, by the way, she has a cottage food business on the side. Now, as you might expect, she is still in the early stages of building her business. But I wanted to have her on the show because there are actually quite a number of young people who reach out to me, wanting to know if and how they can sell their baked goods.

And Lauren literally wrote in her application that she wanted to be on the show to inspire young people everywhere, which having talked with Lauren now, I'm pretty sure is exactly what's about to happen. And with that, welcome to the show, Lauren. Nice to have you here.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:01:16] Thank you for having me.

**David Crabill:** [00:01:19] So Lauren. Take us back to why you started this business and how you were compelled to start it as a 13 year old.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:01:27] Well, when I was eight, I liked to bake and I wanted money for, I don't know, an American girl doll or something, and there's a walkway behind my house. A lot of college students use to get from a busy part of town to campus. So I setup a lemonade stand there after a football game and there are a lot of people walking and I sold cookies and banana bread with some friends. We called it Lauren's Sweet Treats and we made \$68. And we thought that we had struck it rich. And then I stopped doing the lemonade stands for a few years. And then when my spring break extended to remote learning throughout the rest of the year, last year, I decided to take what had been a lemonade stand idea and just make it a real business. And I just decided to look into how I could do that. And that's how it started.

**David Crabill:** [00:02:14] Okay. And you started this, uh, I think right at the beginning or towards the beginning of the year when the pandemic hit. Right.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:02:22] Yes in March.

**David Crabill:** [00:02:24] And did you start it in any way because of the pandemic or was that a coincidence?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:02:30] It was mostly because then I had a lot of time because I didn't have to go to school for eight hours a day. I just had a few classes and I could get my work done really fast. So then I had about twice the amount of free time that I could use to bake.

**David Crabill:** [00:02:45] And, has that time continued to be there or have you been getting back into school?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:02:51] Well, now I'm going hybrid school. So I go to school every other day. And then the days I'm at home, I'm still doing a Zoom for every single class. So I don't usually finish the school day until 4:30. And so I do not have the same amount of time, so I've changed my hours. And so I can only do orders after five and before nine except on the weekends. So the time isn't there as much, but I can still get it all done.

**David Crabill:** [00:03:21] And what did you do to get your business started?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:03:25] well, I think the first thing I did was I started a website. Because I'm really into website design and graphic design. So that was the first thing that I wanted to do. And then I started to get a menu ready. My dad told me that I should only have a few things to start, which was really good advice.

And so I think my original menu, I had red velvet cupcakes, apple cider donuts and frosted sugar cookies. And that worked really well. And so I just started going from there. I got my first order because my mom put something on her Facebook page. And so then all her friends wanted my stuff. And so then it started growing from there.

**David Crabill:** [00:04:06] Leveraging parents' friends. Nice. I like it. That's good. A good marketing strategy for sure. and did you wonder if you were even allowed to start a business as a minor.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:04:19] Um, I did. I did a lot of Googling on how to legally start a business under 18. And you can start it basically the same way as an adult. Just contracts are a little bit different because as a minor you technically don't have to follow through, but that's not great strategy and credit is really hard, but I don't use credit. So it didn't really affect me.

**David Crabill:** [00:04:43] I think it's impressive to me that you put in so much research. You said that's how you found Forrager initially. And I feel like most 13 year olds who want to sell something, they just set up a table out in their front yard and they start selling it. where does this come from? Like you started selling lemonade when you're eight years old and, uh, does this come from your parents? Or like, why do you have such an entrepreneurial spirit?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:05:12] I think a lot of it does come from my parents. My dad has his nonprofit and has done a lot of stuff. And so has my mom. And so I think I just, I wanted people to take me seriously and, you know, it's just a lemonade stand and pretty much every kid does at some point. So I want it to be more legitimate. And so I think that's why I thought, well, I'm going to make a delivery service and people can order online.

**David Crabill:** [00:05:39] And is this something that your parents were encouraging you to do? Or were you, are you the one telling them this is what I'm going to do?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:05:49] It was mostly me telling them this is what I'm going to do. I think I told them I was working on a project and then I just showed them a website. I was like, can I publish this? I really want this. And they were like, sure, go ahead. But they were very encouraging once they knew what I was doing.

**David Crabill:** [00:06:05] You said you're into website development. And what are you using to create the websites that you've worked on?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:06:13] Right now I'm using Wix because it's free. But that also means that my website is [countitalljoy-stl.wixsite.com/home](http://countitalljoy-stl.wixsite.com/home). And so I have built one on Squarespace. I just haven't set it up because it's a lot more expensive and I've also done some design for other people's websites. And I use Squarespace for that.

**David Crabill:** [00:06:34] Yeah, and I definitely recommend going with the free options when you're starting out, Now, have you had to pay for anything to get your business off the ground

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:06:46] No, except for ingredients and packaging, but I haven't had to pay for my website or anything, or online ordering.

**David Crabill:** [00:06:53] and you didn't have any kind of licensing that you had to pay for?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:06:57] Well, technically I'm still in the process of registering my business and taxes. So I will at some point probably in the next month or so, but I have not yet.

**David Crabill:** [00:07:10] And you said that you, in the process of learning about Missouri's cottage food law also learned about st. Louis restrictions. Can you clarify and expand on that? Uh, what did you learn and what should somebody living in Missouri or st. Louis be aware of?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:07:28] Yeah, of course. So the Missouri cottage food law says that you can sell out of your home, events, farmer's markets and roadside stands. In st. Louis. You need a vendor's permit to sell outside of your home, like at farmer's markets, but you can't get a permit without operating out of a commercial kitchen. So in your home kitchen, you can only sell from home.

So I've talked to a lot of people. I have a local farmer's market that I can walk to. And so I've looked into using a commissary or shared kitchen, but I really can't afford it right now, but I hope to sometime.

**David Crabill:** [00:08:04] Yeah, it is unfortunate to hear that you can't sell at markets without getting a commercial kitchen. Um, I don't know, maybe that's something that Missouri can change at some point and ensure that you don't have to, uh, Go through special hoops to just sell at a market. But, it's very, very impressive to see how much you have done to and learned about to get this business off the ground.

And I think, um, people probably are taking you pretty seriously at this point. did you ever find it difficult for people to take you seriously? Because you're only 13 years old.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:08:42] Not really. I've reached out to a couple of people like the person who runs the local farmer's market and another business that just opened a storefront in St. Louis, but ran a home bakery for years. And they've also, they were very impressed and they were very supportive and most of my customers are friends or friends of friends. So most of them already know me. So I haven't really had a lot of trouble taking with people, taking me seriously.

**David Crabill:** [00:09:10] Yeah, I could see it being actually the opposite where they'd probably want to do everything they could to support a young entrepreneur like yourself. What would you say the lemonade stands taught you. In terms of, starting this business?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:09:28] Well, I learned that people don't love it when you name your business after yourself, because I was selling with other people and I was doing it under the name, Lauren Sweet Treats. We just had a poster and someone actually paid us \$20 to change the name. So I, that's why I decided not to name my Count It All Joy, Lauren Sweet Treats.

And I just thought you see a lot of businesses where it's like Deb's Sugar Sweets, and I just wanted it to be different. And, I learned how not to market because we would go up and down the sidewalk, like at a circus and be like, come get your brownies here. Or we would have our friends who are six and seven, just walk up and pretend to be customers.

Like they would just be doing that walking by themselves on a college campus. And so I basically learned what not to do from the lemonade stand.

**David Crabill:** [00:10:29] So, uh, so having, friends pretend to be customers, that's not a good idea?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:10:35] Not if everybody is there watching. I mean, I think it's great to have friends who are real customers, but not if it is a bunch of kids just walking up to a table.

**David Crabill:** [00:10:47] See I think that's actually pretty ingenious that you would even think to try something like that. And that's a concept called social proof. Right. You know, if you're driving down the street and you see one restaurant on one side of the street, that's full of people and you see another restaurant, the other side that is empty.

You're probably get to go to the one that's full because it's a concept of social proof. So that's pretty impressive that even thought to try that marketing concept.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:11:15] Thank you.

**David Crabill:** [00:11:17] Um, and so you're talking about the business name, where does that come from?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:11:22] Well, it's from a Bible verse originally it's from James 1:2. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds." And I just thought it was a nice message. Just count everything joy. Look on the bright side. And I think it's kind of been. Because there have been challenges. And so just, it's kind of just an optimistic, phrase

**David Crabill:** [00:11:48] So have you noticed that it's kind of a nice thing when everyone's, going through this pandemic time, have you felt like you've been able to give joy through your baked goods to people?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:12:02] Yeah. You just get a little bag of cookies that says Count It All Joy on it. And I think it has been really nice.

**David Crabill:** [00:12:08] And how has it been, I mean, has your business been growing over time or has it mostly just stayed with your friends? Like how have you tried to, um, expand your business? If you have tried to expand it at all?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:12:23] Well at the beginning, I told you I started in March, which is technically true, but I didn't get my first real sale until actually August. I was giving away a bunch of food to people who needed it, or like my friend broke her leg. So I gave her some cupcakes and it was all under the name. Count It All Joy.

But I was really running more of a nonprofit because I was making no profit. And so my mom posted something on her Facebook in August, and I think I got eight or nine orders that week. And so that's kind of how it started. And so it has been growing since then. And I partnered with a nonprofit, the Carver project. And so I make the cookies for their events. So that has also helped me grow.

**David Crabill:** [00:13:08] So, what was it like? I mean, were you intentionally starting as a nonprofit? Sounds like you're giving a lot of stuff away for free. what did you learn from that experience?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:13:19] I like giving stuff away because it makes me feel like a nice person. But it also wasn't very effective because I was only losing money and I'm pretty sure at that point, I was also still using my mom's ingredients and all of her stuff. And so it was really just me, like taking cookies over to someone's house. And so it wasn't really a business. I would just put the sticker on there and be like, go check out my website.

**David Crabill:** [00:13:48] And what kind of, um, where were you giving food away to? Or who were you giving it to?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:13:55] Um, there were a lot of meal trains happening then because people are losing their jobs or people are having babies in a pandemic or. So it was mostly if we would take it a meal or I would just be like, Oh, it's your birthday next week. Here have a dozen cupcakes. But I would be working and losing money on those cupcakes and I wasn't getting anything in return. So I wasn't intentionally starting a nonprofit, but then that's how it ended up.

**David Crabill:** [00:14:26] so you started to sell in August and, What have you, you done to try to grow your business?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:14:35] I pretty much tell everyone to go look at my website anywhere I can. And then I have a Facebook page. So if I post something, then that's marketing, but I haven't tried any ads. I just don't think it's really necessary. I have an email campaign. And a

lot of it has been word of mouth. I do have some things that I have thought about, but never actually, like I keep second guessing myself, it's not a good idea. Like handwritten letters. My original idea was I was going to write handwritten letters to everybody who ordered a certain amount or a big thing. Just be like, thank you so much. This was really helpful. I hope you come back. I never actually, I think I kind of chickened out on that, cause I was like, that doesn't seem professional.

No, one's gonna want to get a letter from a bakery. And then I do put samplers of other items in with the order. So if someone orders a dozen cookies, I'll put a dozen chocolate chip cookies and then also a couple of frosted cookies or a cupcake. And I also like giving extras. So if they were a dozen, I'll give them 14.

**David Crabill:** [00:15:46] Now you said you don't think that people would like getting a handwritten note?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:15:50] I'm not sure. I've gone back and forth, on it a lot. I think I will try it. I think I definitely will after the holiday season, because I'm thinking that would be pretty busy and who doesn't like to thank you note after Christmas,

**David Crabill:** [00:16:06] Yeah, it's definitely a lot of work, but I think you'd be surprised at how effective it is because you know, it's becoming increasingly uncommon for people to receive notes like that. And, um, yeah. I think, I think you'd be surprised that it does make a, quite a difference and it resonates with people and it might be a really good tool if you're willing to put in the time. And I know that you're a good writer, so, uh, yeah, you might be surprised at how effective that is.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:16:34] Okay, I'll try it. Thank you.

**David Crabill:** [00:16:36] now I was just thinking about your schedule and. like what, what other things are you doing aside from this cottage food business? Um, you've got school. You've got homework. Are you involved in any other projects?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:16:53] yes, I play the piano, so I actually have piano in an hour and a half, I think. And I go to youth group. I go, I'm part of some clubs, but they don't meet. They usually meet once or twice a month. And I go to Bible study every Friday morning at seven, and there are a few things, but they're not super consistent. So it kind of depends, but I do have some other extracurricular activities as well.

**David Crabill:** [00:17:22] I feel like I read somewhere that you like started a magazine or something, um, or newspaper.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:17:30] yes in fifth grade, I started a school newspaper at my elementary school. And that was really fun. I got interviewed by a local magazine about that. So that was the really interesting experience. But I don't go to that school anymore. And so I'm not part of that. I am part of my new school newspaper though.

**David Crabill:** [00:17:47] Yeah. So definitely a consistent trend of you, uh, taking leadership roles and starting things and starting projects, um, at a very young age and did your parents like push you a lot in school? Like you seem like you're very well-educated for your age.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:18:08] Um, they weren't like get straight A's, but they said like, if you studied really hard and you still got a C. Well, that's fine, because you worked at it. But if you didn't study and you're being lazy and you got a C, well, that's a different story. And I'm really lucky because I go to a really nice school here and it's like the number one college prep school in Missouri. And so I'm really lucky to go there and they have great teachers and so I'm very blessed on the education scale.

**David Crabill:** [00:18:39] And you have siblings, right?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:18:41] Yes. I have two younger siblings, a brother who is seven and a sister who's eleven.

**David Crabill:** [00:18:47] Okay. So you're the oldest sibling. So have you, uh, recruited your siblings to help you out with the business? I mean, you know, employees, you know, you got to get the employees going.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:18:59] Yeah. My sister was the unofficial marketing director for about a month until she quit, because she told me I was a bad boss, but she made me a very lovely giant cardboard sign with a picture of a cake on it that says Count It All Joy. And so she likes it. Yes. She likes being up here when I'm doing like customer info and emails and stuff.

**David Crabill:** [00:19:23] What, what made you a bad boss?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:19:26] I have no idea. I think she didn't like that I had to tell her what to do.

**David Crabill:** [00:19:30] yeah. Well, see, that's real life learning right there. You're already learning what it's like in the real world.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:19:39] Yup.

**David Crabill:** [00:19:40] Where, um, where do you see this business going as you move forward?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:19:47] I think at least for a number of years, I do want it to be just be a side thing. I don't really want baking to be my entire career. but I would, my dream is when I'm older and I'm retired, I do want to start a storefront, but I want it to be a side business for the most part.

**David Crabill:** [00:20:06] So you're 13 years old and you're already thinking about retirement. So you're ahead of me when it comes to, you're thinking in a way beyond, when I was 13 years old, I'm pretty sure I was just, um, thinking about what the next video game, you know, Was going to be, and I don't think I had any thoughts about retirement. So would you like to work in a bakery someday?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:20:31] Yes. I think mostly for the experience, I don't really like the idea of having a boss. I don't know. I like being my own boss. And so, I mean, I'm going to have to get a job at some point, but probably I know some friends who are just 16 or 17, they work in a bakery before or after school. And so I think I'd want that. But again, I don't really want baking to be my entire career, so yes, but I don't want my job to be, to work at a bakery.

**David Crabill:** [00:21:04] And you were talking about what you'd like to do in retirement. Do you have, it sounds like you have a pretty solid life plan already. So what, what are you planning on doing? Um, College post-college. What do you like, what do you envision your life looking like?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:21:21] Well, my dad says I'm going to be a lawyer. I want to be a pediatric orthopedic surgeon. And so I want to go to Wash U Med School and work at the Washington university school of medicine. And I like bones and hospitals. So I think that'd be really interesting.

**David Crabill:** [00:21:41] I had no idea what I wanted to do when I was, um, 18. I still don't know what I want to do. So, um, that's pretty impressive that you already have pretty clear vision for what you want to do. Now you took until you were 13 years old to start this cottage food business. And you did it because of the pandemic. Now that you've started it, do you wish you had started it sooner?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:22:04] I don't think so just because I had a lot going on. there were no fall sports this year, so that would've been another thing on my plate. And so I had a play and sports and things that got postponed or canceled because of the pandemic. And so I think that I like that I started it when I had a lot of time. I don't think it would have really lasted if I had tried to start it before the pandemic.

**David Crabill:** [00:22:32] I know you haven't been running your business for a very long time, but has there been any memorable stories that have come out of your business already?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:22:44] well, there have been a lot of times when I just haven't managed my time very well. So it would be very late, sometimes past midnight and I'll be frosting cookies. I'll have to go to school. I'll have to wake up for school in six and a half hours. And so that's always very. Not very fun. And there was one time when I stacked up cookies, frosted cookies before they had dried. And so the frosting got smeared everywhere and they were basically ruined. So that was an interesting experience.

**David Crabill:** [00:23:20] Well, so you are a human, I'm glad to hear that, uh, you have the same issues that I do when I'm trying to, uh, make things happen and doing things late and running behind schedule. Um, certainly happens to all of us.

So what would you say to a fellow 13 year old, who is. Maybe thinking about starting a food business.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:23:43] Well, this sounds so cliché, but just go for it. Cause there's always so many reasons not to do something. And so I think you can do it. It's actually very

surprising how little restrictions there are on minors. So it's, you definitely want someone else's help. Like I've had my parents and, another owner of a bakery and just other people who work in the food industry, and of course Forrager to help me. And so you can't do it by yourself, but you should definitely just go for it. Cause even if it doesn't work, I mean the worst case scenario is that it lasts for a couple months and then it just fizzles out. You're not going to lose a ton of money or ruin your reputation or anything.

So when you're a kid, you don't have to support a family or there's not a whole lot of pressure as there is of just quitting your day job and starting a business as an adult. So why not try it out now?

**David Crabill:** [00:24:41] Were your friends surprised that you started this business?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:24:47] I'm not sure. I just started at my school last year. And so kind of. When everyone met me, I told them that I like to bake and they, I was just kind of labeled as the baking girl. And so I think my friends who have known me for a long time were not, but I think it's always kind of fun to be like, "Oh yeah, I just have to go make four dozen cookies tonight for an order." And they're like, "An order?" I'm like, "Oh yeah, I have this baking business." And they're like, "That's so cool!" And so I think they have been really supportive, but it's really fun.

**David Crabill:** [00:25:18] Do you think you're, um, you're inspiring them to start their own businesses or, or do anything entrepreneurial?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:25:26] I'm not sure. My friend, she does have a clothing business and I think people, people have been, Oh yeah, I can make caramel popcorn. I might try selling that sometime. And so I think I have been in a way. But I'm also not really a hundred percent sure. I hope I have. I like to think I have.

**David Crabill:** [00:25:47] has your business surprised you in any way? And if so, how.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:25:51] Not really, I didn't expect packaging to cost so much, but I also, I didn't really have any money when I started. So I think for the first few orders I was using my mom's ingredients. And then when I got enough money to go buy my own, I did that. So I haven't made a whole lot of money, but I didn't really expect to.

So there haven't been that many surprises. It's kind of, I didn't, I think I have a business plan somewhere, but I haven't really followed it. It's kind of been more of a go with the flow thing because there aren't really any stakes. It's kind of just a fun activity.

**David Crabill:** [00:26:30] Have you been, uh, managing your own accounting and how have you been keeping track of numbers?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:26:38] Um, yes, I have a, well, I have a bunch of customer lists, so every customer gets a little paper with their, all their contact info. And then I, every time they order something, I put it down and then write the price and then once they've paid it, they get a little check Mark next to their order. And so I accept my money in cash or Venmo. And so I have a separate Venmo account just for Count It All Joy. And then that goes into my

bank account. And so that's collected there. And then I like to keep track of how much money I'm making per week. And I have a little spreadsheet with how much money I'm making and losing.

**David Crabill:** [00:27:20] and now. You said that you're also keeping track of emails and you have an email list. How is that going?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:27:30] Um, pretty good. So Wix has an email campaign that you can just use through them and they keep track of all your contacts. I also like to have them, so if something happened so I can just click send to all my customers. Or some people who haven't ordered anything subscribed to my site. So they also get the email campaign and I don't send a ton of emails because I know I don't like getting an email every day from something that I'm subscribed to. Like come check out our new things.

So it's really only if something happens, like if I have a new menu introduced or a new item, then I'll send an email or probably when this podcast comes out I'll send an email saying, come check this out. So. I don't like sending a ton, but I think people will talk to me. They're like, Oh yeah, I got your email from Count It All joy. I really want to check that out.

**David Crabill:** [00:28:20] Are you sending like once a week or once a month? Like how often are you sending emails?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:28:26] I'm not entirely consistent. It's really only if something happens and I haven't, I've thought about being more consistent, like a week, a monthly newsletter or something, but I don't really see the point. Cause I don't really know what I would say unless I have something new coming out. So no, not at this point.

**David Crabill:** [00:28:50] Now, how has your menu adapted over time? Like have you been trying new things or introducing new products for people to try or has it stayed pretty much the same from the beginning?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:29:04] So the regular menu has stayed basically the same. It was originally red velvet cupcakes, sugar cookies, and, Apple cider donuts. And right now I have red velvet cupcakes and vanilla cupcakes, and I made these really fun cupcakes for a birthday party that were Blues hockey Team themed. And that was really fun.

And so I decided I could do custom stuff too, so you can order custom cakes, sugar cookies, or cupcakes. And so like I made a witch unicorn cake for a Halloween party and that was really fun. And there's also, there's regular sugar cookies and chocolate chip cookies. And then right now there's my fall menu, which has ginger molasses cookies which are spicy, but good. And Apple cider donuts. And I believe that's it.

**David Crabill:** [00:29:59] Where are you getting the inspiration for these different products?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:30:04] I don't know. I think I found the molasses cookies on food network or something, and I tried them out and I was like, Oh, these taste really good. I think I'll start selling these after I try them a few more times. And so that's mostly where it's come from. I really like the Apple cider donuts.

I just think they're very fall themed. And they're also, they taste very fresh. So it's mostly just been, if I like something, I think, well, other people will probably like it too, I hope. And so I put it on there.

**David Crabill:** [00:30:38] Have you noticed some of your products are doing a lot better than others?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:30:43] Yes. People really like the Apple cider donuts. And one customer said that they ate eight of them in one day. So... that's good for me. I'm not sure it's so great for them, but, um, and I do the iced sugar cookies for the nonprofit. So obviously I'm selling those a lot and the chocolate chip cookies.

**David Crabill:** [00:31:08] And how did you determine your pricing?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:31:11] Well, my prices are pretty low because the ingredients don't cost that much. Really the most expensive thing is butter, but I can get that in bulk for a lot cheaper. And so the pricing, I mean, I know this isn't the best thing to do. I'll kind of look at a grocery store and be like, I'll raise it up a dollar.

I mean, it always depends. One time I saw something at Costco selling 36 macarons for like \$8. I was like, that's ridiculous. But, um, it's mostly been what I felt was right. I don't like overcharging, but I'm still making a profit. So it's working for me. I mean, I'm kind of looking now I'm thinking. Maybe \$4 for six chocolate chip cookies is very low, but I feel like it's working.

So I don't think I need to change anything right now. I would like to raise prices eventually though.

**David Crabill:** [00:32:08] What would the Apple cider donuts cost?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:32:12] Right now they cost \$6.50 for a half dozen and \$12 for a dozen. And those are actually very not complicated. They only take about 30 minutes in all for a dozen or two dozen. And so I like those prices. I think I could raise them because they're so popular. So I don't know. I, could probably, I have to think about more, maybe like \$14 for a dozen.

**David Crabill:** [00:32:40] Well as you run your business for longer, what you can do is you can increase your prices and, uh, see if it changes anything. You might find that people don't blink an eye at the higher price.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:32:54] Yeah and then for people, like I had a school order, five dozen, and so I gave them a 10% discount or the non-profit. They get the cookies for. Half of the price, but they order a lot. So it still adds up.

**David Crabill:** [00:33:10] now, um, do you have a plan for this money that you're trying to make? Is there, is there, um, a mission behind starting this business and making money or, uh, are you reinvesting the money? Like, is there anything that drives you to be, to be making money?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:33:28] Not really. I feel like it's kind of nice to just have it. So if there was something that I really wanted, I could be like, Okay, well, I have the money so I can spend it, or I cannot, and I do want to give, there's a lot of immigrants in St. Louis. And so I want to give some of the money to Harvest Ministries, which does a lot with the immigrants and, but not all of it because I'm not that nice, but I think it's mostly just sitting in my bank account. And that's kind of how I'd like to keep it.

**David Crabill:** [00:34:00] Are you aware of Chloe the 13 year old baker? Or it was a number of years ago, she was 13 years old, but she was, um, starting in Illinois, just one state over from you. Have you heard her story?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:34:15] Didn't she get a kitchen out of that?

**David Crabill:** [00:34:17] Yeah, she got on the Rachael Ray Show, but I just bring her up because she, I think her, her motivation was she wanted to buy a car.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:34:24] I mean, that would be nice too. I can't drive yet, but eventually.

**David Crabill:** [00:34:29] um, yeah. And so you had talked about, um, I know you're not going to get a kitchen or build a kitchen in your home, but you had looked into renting a commercial kitchen. What did you learn in the process of looking into that?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:34:42] Um, it costs money. I know some businesses they'll partner with them and use a shared kitchen for free. But I don't really know a lot of bakers in person. So, there are a couple of shared kitchens specifically for the purpose of helping startups, but it's still pretty expensive.

And a big thing is food storage. Like they'll charge \$150 a month just to keep your food there. Not even for kitchen use. And that's the money that I don't really have. And so I just don't think at this point, especially in the winter now, but I don't really need to be selling at farmer's markets. And it kind of feels like one more thing that I have to do.

And so, because you want to be consistent once you get out there, you don't just want to be going back and forth. And so I don't really think it would be worth it right now. But there definitely are options. There's also food halls where you can get a storefront area with it, but I have school and it's not my full time commitment, so that wouldn't really work either.

**David Crabill:** [00:35:53] You know for you, I can almost bet that there's some commercial kitchen out there that would let you use their commercial kitchen for free, and you don't have to just limit it to bakeries, but you can look in, um, public spaces, community centers, churches. if you start to ask around. there's probably a kitchen that's nearby. Cause you're in a city you're in st. Louis, right? So, you know, there's probably plenty of kitchens nearby and I'll bet one of them would let you use their kitchen in off hours so that you could sell at a farmer's market.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:36:27] Oh, well, I'll look into that.

**David Crabill:** [00:36:29] Yeah. I would definitely explore that before, you know, trying to pay \$25 an hour or something like that for a commercial kitchen space. and were you looking at specific farmer's markets before you learned about the restrictions?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:36:45] Um, yeah, so there are a number of farmer's markets in st. Louis. A lot of them are actually associated with one farmer's market that just has a bunch of locations, but there's actually one that just opened a year ago. I think it takes me 10 minutes to walk there. And so that would probably be ideal because it's so close, but that's definitely, it's called the U City Farmers Market. It's definitely the one that I would want to sell at

**David Crabill:** [00:37:10] Do you feel like there's an end date on this business? Or do you want to just, uh, run it indefinitely at this point?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:37:21] I think, I kinda just want to see how far it will go. I mean, obviously this is in, like five years, but if it's still on, when I have to go to college, then that would be very interesting to see how that would play out, but I like doing it and I don't really see reason to not do it. So I think I'll just keep it going for as long as possible.

**David Crabill:** [00:37:46] And why do you love running your business?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:37:49] Um, because well, one it's something to do. I can't really be bored. My mom would not say the same thing. I tell her I'm bored all the time. and I like to bake cause before I would want to bake the same amount, but we can't have a cake and four dozen cookies in the house. They just get thrown away because we can't eat all of that. And so it's an excuse to bake and, you know, making money. So that's another little additional thing.

**David Crabill:** [00:38:16] Well, thank you very much, Lauren, for coming on the show now, how could people learn more about your business and reach out to you?

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:38:25] Okay. So my website, it's very specific. You can put the link in the description, right?

**David Crabill:** [00:38:30] Yeah, I'll put the link in the show notes.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:38:32] Okay, so it's [countitaljoy-stl.wixsite.com/home](https://countitaljoy-stl.wixsite.com/home). And I'm still working on search engine optimization. But at this point, I don't think you can Google it and find it. So either there's the link or on Facebook at [countitaljoystl](https://www.facebook.com/countitaljoystl), or email [countitaljoystl@gmail.com](mailto:countitaljoystl@gmail.com).

**David Crabill:** [00:38:56] Perfect. Well, uh, I think it's super impressive what you've already done in your business. Yes. And I look forward to hearing more about how your business grows into 2021.

**Lauren Inazu:** [00:39:07] Thank you.

**David Crabill:** [00:39:09] That wraps up another episode of the Forrager podcast. I am so impressed with Lauren's entrepreneurial spirit at such a young age. She is certainly mature beyond her years, and I'm looking forward to seeing how her business evolves over time.

As Lauren said, it doesn't matter how old you are... you can start a cottage food business. To learn how to do so, 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/23](http://forrager.com/podcast/23). Thanks for listening. And I'll see you in the next episode.