

Do Whatever It Takes with Whitney Singletary

David Crabill: Welcome to the Forrager podcast, where I talk with cottage food entrepreneurs, about their strategies for running a food business from home. I'm David Crabill, and today I'm talking with Whitney Singletary, Whitney lives in Berkeley, California, and sells nut flavored cookies with her cottage food business, Nuttin' Butter Cookies.

Whitney started her unique cookie business back in 2015 and has overcome many obstacles, get her business to where it is today.

on this episode, you'll hear how she built up to the point of selling from a storefront in late 2019 only to move back to selling from her front yard. When the pandemic hit, she is a single mom of two kids, and somehow manages to be open for business five days a week, rain or shine. You will quickly realize that Whitney will do whatever it takes to turn her vision into a reality, no matter what stands in her way.

And with that, let's jump right into this episode. Welcome to the show, Whitney. Nice to have you here.

[00:00:55] **Whitney Singletary:** Hi, nice to be here.

[00:00:57] **David Crabill:** so Whitney, can you tell us how did this whole adventure get started?

[00:01:02] **Whitney Singletary:** It started with me rebelling against banks. And I first started back in 2015. I had a business plan. I went to my bank that I've been with for like almost 10 years and went in there to try and get some money to get a brick and mortar location. And I was instantly denied regardless of my credit score, no debt.

It was just, no, you're not going to do it because the food industry is hard and you are creating a company with cookies that no one's ever even heard of. So we're not going to. And I was like, oh, well, in that case then, I will just sell in my driveway and I'll raise the money I need to, and turns out that the city of Berkeley offers cottage food operations.

And I said, oh, I can do this legally. So I don't have to be harassed by the police or anything, or any neighbors or anybody. So I said, I'm gonna go ahead and do that. And I could just set up at any event anywhere in Alameda county, which gave me more flexibility besides being in a brick and mortar. So I could save up the money to get the brick and mortar

[00:02:00] **David Crabill:** Yeah. Yeah. We'll get into the brick and mortar in a little bit. But what got you even interested in starting this business in 2015? You know, I know you sell cookies, where did this passion come from?

[00:02:11] **Whitney Singletary:** I've been baking for 28 years now. It's been in my blood. My family's are bakers and cooks. My grandpa used to own a restaurant when I was little and I used to always be in there and he never had desserts. It was always a thing where I was going to make the desserts. Cause I always used to bake cookies, cakes, pies, everything, and he died before we got a chance to do that.

Always. I always wanted to have that for me. That's when I said in 2015 I was like, it's it, I'm done. I'm doing it. This is my passion. My go-to thing. When I am stressed, I'm happy. This is my happy spot in the kitchen. And I'm going to do it regardless. If no one's telling me I should do it. I don't have the money to get started.

I'm just going to just do it. And I quit my old job and started it.

[00:02:55] **David Crabill:** I saw that you that in 2015, that was not the first time you actually sold your cookies. When did you first sell them?

[00:03:03] **Whitney Singletary:** 19 94, 95, I was eight and I really, really wanted this toy that my mom said she wasn't going to buy me. So I made some peanut butter cookies. My great, great grandmother's recipe. And I took those cookies to school, asked the principal, would it be okay if I can sell those cookies after school or maybe during lunch?

And the principal said yes. And to humor me, he bought one. And it was so good. He told the staff members that was selling cookies and they all bought all my cookies before lunchtime came. And when I got ready to have lunch of my friends that were all like, where are the cookies, ready to buy cookies, and if I sold them all out and I was happy that I sold out, but my friends were like sad and depressed.

Cause I sold all the cookies before they got any, but I was able to go after school and get that toy. And it's just been in me since then.

[00:03:54] **David Crabill:** Oh, that's a cool story. And yeah, you said that your, it was your great, great grandmother's recipe.

[00:04:01] **Whitney Singletary:** Yes. Great, great, great. Great. four greats.

[00:04:05] **David Crabill:** Wow. Tell me a little bit about this recipe.

[00:04:09] **Whitney Singletary:** This recipe is so old that it used to be in steps where she literally would. She grew her own peanut. So she would grow them, pull them up, clean them, roast them and turn them into the butter. She would churn her own butter. She had a farm, so she would collect her own eggs and molasses out of the tree.

It was like in steps. And over the years it has got converted down to, you can just go buy some butter. You can go buy some eggs. But my grand auntie is the one who passed the recipe down to me. Cause she was the main baker in the family that kept all the tradition, family recipes going. So I was always in the kitchen and she was like, oh, you put a little bit of this in here.

You do a little bit like this. And we always mix it with a fork. We don't use none of those fancy mixers. So I still to this day mix all of my cookies with a fork,

[00:04:58] **David Crabill:** Really. Wow.

[00:04:59] **Whitney Singletary:** No mixer.

[00:05:00] **David Crabill:** And are you still using that original recipe in your business?

[00:05:04] **Whitney Singletary:** I am still using the original recipe and those cookies I made when I was eight. I'm still using the exact same peanut butter. So the same cookie I made 28 years ago. It's the same cookies I'm making right now.

[00:05:16] **David Crabill:** Wow. And I imagine you're not pulling up the peanuts and

[00:05:22] **Whitney Singletary:** No,

[00:05:22] **David Crabill:** I'm kidding.

[00:05:23] **Whitney Singletary:** but I actually planned on doing that for our anniversary. Next year. I wanted to make it a college at the 1800 cookie. And I wanted to actually grow some peanuts so I have a peanut plant growing right now. And so I bought a peanut plant and it's been growing nicely. So I said, hopefully by next year, I'll have some peanuts and I can actually make a full batch, the way she did the original way.

I'm going to make butter too. Just so I can say I did it the way it was originally intended to be made.

[00:05:54] **David Crabill:** wow. That's very cool. So now tell us a little bit about your cookies. They're very unique.

[00:06:00] **Whitney Singletary:** Yes, for me, when I grew up, I always just eat cookies and my grandpa's from Texas. So he always had mixed nuts. And so those were my two favorite things, snack wise. So when I grew up it was just natural to put my two favorite things together, and it turns out that a lot of other bakeries don't use nuts in their product because of the allergen.

And I'm like, well, where do people go to get a cookie to have nuts in it, besides a cookie that has sprinkles of flavoring of nuts. So I started the company by making it being, I want to be the only one specializing in all of the nuts and that's what I did. So I actually offer all 14.

[00:06:36] **David Crabill:** So what, what are some of the most popular flavors that you have?

[00:06:41] **Whitney Singletary:** Uh, The most popular flavors, it varies, it's always different, but I have?

offered peanut butter, almond, pinenut, cashew, Brazil, pistachio, Chestnut, hazelnut, pecan Walnut macadamia, and my two new ones that I've added to the line, the pili nut and the baru nut.

[00:07:01] **David Crabill:** Yeah, it sounds like just about every nut that's out there. Uh, And you have a couple, you have a seed and a non nut, right?

[00:07:08] **Whitney Singletary:** Yes. I have a, I wanted to keep the tradition of making my cookies different than everyone else. It was like, we're not traditional. That's just what we are. And so I offer a Sesame seed. I offer a coconut and I offer a call it, the Cocomo is a chocolate butter cookie. And then I have one that's just a regular butter cookie that's thin and crispy.

So I have options for people who don't want nuts, but want a cookie. That's not the same cookie that you get anywhere.

[00:07:39] **David Crabill:** why did you feel like it was so important to do something that was different from everyone else?

[00:07:45] **Whitney Singletary:** Well, a lot of people were telling me that it's very competitive, that people can go anywhere and get a chocolate chip cookie. So what will make a person want to buy cookies from me when they can just go to any place anywhere? And I said, that's a good point. So keeping that in mind, I said, I'm going to make something that you can't get.

Nowhere else. You have no choice, but to get it from me, if you want what I have. And that's why I created my so different. So it's my mission to do everything that they don't.

[00:08:11] **David Crabill:** Has the niche of having nut cookies. Has that been limiting at all?

[00:08:17] **Whitney Singletary:** It has not a lot of people who are looking for nuts or craving nuts are glad to find someone who has nuts. And because I offer so many, I have a favorite nut for everyone. So if someone loves walnuts, get one of my cookies, they don't feel cheated by getting a Walnut cookie and struggling to find the walnuts in that cookie.

Like some places offer. Cause my cookie has the Walnut butter, the walnut flour. Then it has more walnuts chopped up mixed in it. And then it's topped with walnuts. So when you're getting this cooking and walnut's your favorite nut, you're getting it through every single bite throughout the whole cookie. And you're never left feeling cheated for the cookie, the nut's the star. And I wanted them all to shine.

[00:09:00] **David Crabill:** Yeah, it sounds like a very unique cookie and you had the peanut butter cookie recipe from your great, great, great, great grandmother, but was it pretty easy to formulate the other cookies from these different nut nuts?

[00:09:16] **Whitney Singletary:** It was not, luckily for me, science was one of my favorite subjects, but because it turned into a lab experiment because the nut butters all have different oil ratios. And so when you can't just swap out the peanut butter and then put in cashew butter And expect it to be the same, it didn't come out that way.

It was not that simple. I had to actually adjust the amount of butter. I needed a regular butter adjust the amount of actual nut butter to get the recipe just right. So I can get the texture and the flavor that I wanted for each cookie. And then you add extra nuts. Those nuts also have oils too. So you have to do a lot of balance.

And I have perfected all of my recipes because all of my recipes, besides the peanut butter one are all mine. And so it took some, it took some time to adjust them, to get them the way I wanted. But the peanut butter cookie is the base for all of them.

[00:10:09] **David Crabill:** And I saw that you use organic ingredients.

[00:10:13] **Whitney Singletary:** Yes. Uh, All of my nut butters are all organic, very simple ingredients. Like, almond butter. The only ingredient in it is raw organic almonds and that's it. And so a lot of my, I wanted to keep the ingredients. some of my sugars are organic, like the coconut Palm sugar and my cane sugar.

The flour I have not been able to find the flour that I like. That is organic. that is cost-efficient. So for right now there's not a hundred percent organic, but I do like the, the main ingredients are

[00:10:46] **David Crabill:** And you just buying these nut butters from the store or are you processing the nuts at all yourself to turn them into the butter?

[00:10:55] **Whitney Singletary:** I buy the majority of my nuts online because the stores don't offer the nut butters that I have, like pine nuts. They told me it didn't exist. And I'm like, it does exist. I use it when I have ran out the, went to trader Joe's, Whole Foods, none of the specialty stores that sell non-traditional things, never heard of none of the nut butters or the nut flours that I use, but the Baru and the Pili nut, I actually make those nut butters. Cause I can't find those with simple ingredients.

[00:11:24] **David Crabill:** Yeah. I was saying it's sometimes hard to even find pine nuts in the store and pine nut butter, I just think would be next to impossible in a

[00:11:32] **Whitney Singletary:** It is, it really is.

[00:11:35] **David Crabill:** So you, you buy most of your stuff online. Is there a certain website or is it just the Amazon? Where are you buying stuff from?

[00:11:43] **Whitney Singletary:** Uh, Buy them from a couple of different spots. it's a vitamin store that actually sell some kind of luckyvitamins.com. I found them accidentally cause I was on there buying vitamins and I was just browsing through the website.

I'm like, where can I find this? And it said that they had pine nuts. And I said, Hey, they might have pine nut butter too. And it turns out it's listed in that butters, it showed me almost all the nut butters that I needed. So I go to that site and go to a couple of other sites to piece them all together so I can get all 14 nuts.

[00:12:14] **David Crabill:** I'm just curious. I mean, I, I know pine nuts and it's not even probably one of your biggest flavors, but I know they're so expensive. How much do you actually have to spend to get pine nut butter?

[00:12:26] **Whitney Singletary:** My pine nut butter comes in an eight ounce jar and is \$18.95 a jar.

[00:12:33] **David Crabill:** Yeah, that's pretty expensive.

[00:12:34] **Whitney Singletary:** It is, but I know how much to use in this jar. I can get enough to make the cookies. Still have a full flavor, and still be cost efficient. So it's not breaking the bank. So I could still offer the cookie at the low \$3 price.

[00:12:49] **David Crabill:** Now with you specializing in nuts, I'd imagine that here, you're not catering at all to people that have nut allergies. Has that ever been a concern?

[00:13:00] **Whitney Singletary:** Uh, Actually, I do cater to people who have allergies all the time. All my customers are like, oh, I'm allergic to peanut or I'm allergic to such and such. And I have not had anyone have any problems because I don't have any cross-contamination because I'm aware of the nut

allergen. When I'm mixing everything has its own separate bowl, separate spoon.

Everything's separate. I bake them separately. So if you are allergic to almonds, you can eat the cashew without any worry, because there won't be any cross-contamination, even when I'm packaging them up, they're all bagged individually too. So everything's nice and secure and keep it sanitized that way.

And so you don't have to worry allergen problems. And because I make all of my cookies, when people ask me any allergen question, they can ask me, is there a particular thing in it? And I can tell them right off the way, like for some reason, the pecan butter does have cashew butter in it. I don't control that cause that's how the company makes it.

But if someone was allergic to cashews, I let them know, don't eat the pecan because it has cashews in that nut butter. So they're aware.

[00:14:09] **David Crabill:** So when you started selling in 2015, you were just selling out in front of your house, right?

[00:14:16] **Whitney Singletary:** No, I was actually doing little holiday boutiques and craft fairs around and Berkeley, Alameda and Richmond selling on my website. And When I moved to the location I'm at Right. now on uh, in the white way. That's when I started selling outside. Cause I have a full driveway before I didn't have a driveway. Now I do so I'm like, yes, I got a driveway. I could put a whole full tent, the whole table, the whole shebang. My, my main setup I would have when I did our events

[00:14:45] **David Crabill:** Right. So at the events, when you got started, how did it go? Was there a good reception to your cookies? Or how quickly did your business take off?

[00:14:55] **Whitney Singletary:** took off pretty well because I felt that if you have a good product and you have a good connection with your customers, they tell other people. It's word of mouth and that's kind of what got the main start going. When I first started, they were like, even at the events, Ooh, where did you get that cookie? Boom.

She's the only one with those types of cookies. Everybody just flocked to me, sold out. Ah, I was like I wish I had made more cookies, but it is always was one of those things where people are very open to it. And then when I was selling in the driveway, the neighbors were all, oh, let's support. And the

community that I live in a very supportive, so they tell all their friends and then they tell their friends, tell their friends and people post on their own social media is about if you're ever in Berkeley visiting or just in town or in this area, make sure to go by this spot to get cookies. The best in the bay, is what they say.

And I'm like, oh, okay, well, thank you. I appreciate all of the positive feedback. Then the Yelp page helps a lot.

[00:15:56] **David Crabill:** Yeah. I saw a five stars, right.

[00:15:59] **Whitney Singletary:** yeah, it was flattering. I didn't even know I had that many stars until a customer told me that they had saw my uh, five stars on Yelp. And because they saw those, they wanted to come try the cookies themselves. And I was like, oh, I inquired. I was like, oh my gosh. Wow. People say all these things about me. I felt so humbled and flattered at the same time, I was like, wow.

just being me selling my cookies, making sure that every time I make a batch of cookies, they're good. And if they're don't come out the way I want them to, I don't even sell them. So it was nice to have people have all that positive reinforcement backing up the cookies.

[00:16:37] **David Crabill:** yeah, you're certainly doing something. Right. So you were selling at these events doing pretty well. And then you eventually moved. When did you move into the home where you're selling out in front of your home?

[00:16:49] **Whitney Singletary:** same year I started I started back in March, April of 2015, and then November of 2015 is when I moved over here in April, 2016 is when I had started selling in the driveway.

[00:17:03] **David Crabill:** Okay, so you moved to your home and then you started selling in the driveway. Did that increase your business a lot? How did that affect your business when you started selling in front of your house?

[00:17:15] **Whitney Singletary:** It did because I was only selling my cookies during events. So when there were no events, there were nowhere for me to sell my cookies. So when I had the driveway, I'm like, look, I could be here Monday through Friday, even when there isn't an event. And so it increased, the sales cause I was able to, so more often

[00:17:32] **David Crabill:** you're a mom to a couple of kids, right?

[00:17:37] **Whitney Singletary:** I am, two little boys

[00:17:39] **David Crabill:** How do you manage this business with your boy?

[00:17:42] **Whitney Singletary:** I have learned to multitask very well but no, my sons are very helpful. They like to be in the kitchen. Like I was when I was little, they'd remind me a lot of me. And so it's nice when they're like, oh, let's come help Mommy mix some dough, let's help mommy put some cookies in the bag or they'll tell all their friends you know you got to make sure you buy mommy's cookies.

And it's really nice. Or they'll sweep or wash the dishes afterwards, but it is a struggle being a single mom with two kids, but I have mastered it where it's not so stressful.

[00:18:19] **David Crabill:** well at what are your hours that you are out in front of your house?

[00:18:23] **Whitney Singletary:** 3:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

[00:18:26] **David Crabill:** I just was thinking, I mean, if you've got, if you're a single mom with two kids, how do you manage to have. And I feel like in the past, maybe after the pandemic you're open even longer than that, like how do you manage to be available that long with the kids?

[00:18:41] **Whitney Singletary:** It's a matter of in the morning when I'm making the cookies. For example, like dinner, I will prep all the stuff that needs to be done for dinner and get the cookies going. Then when it's dinner time, I take me a quick break from business and I'll put my little bell outside and my little sign that says, please ring the bell for service.

And I come in, do my mommy duties, make dinner, make sure homework is done and give them their food and head back outside. And so it's kind of a juggle

[00:19:12] **David Crabill:** wow. That is very impressive. I have a couple kids and, and I, I'm not single and I just can't even imagine. It's just a very impressive that you can manage all this stuff and run your business at the same time. You're an inspiration to a lot of people. I'm sure.

[00:19:29] **Whitney Singletary:** Yeah. I'm persistently stubborn. So even when something feels a bit too much, I don't quit. Even some days you're like, oh my God, this is overwhelming. I got order of 300 cookies to do the kids got homework. I'm like, oh, I need to do laundry. And it's like, I just find a way it just happens.

I don't know how, but I've figured out a way to get everything that needs to get done done. And then I'm like, yes, I could sit back and go. I did all of that.

[00:19:58] **David Crabill:** And I saw that. I mean, you're out there no matter what, it looked like, rain or shine. Uh,

[00:20:04] **Whitney Singletary:** Yes. Hail, there was one, a couple of times it hailed out there. I was like, why is it hailing in the middle of the day? But I'm out here in the cold, the wind, the gusty wind. It was like 20 mile per hour, winds flipped my whole canopy over. Ah, I am out there. But the rain is not as bad when it's not cold. So it's like the cold winter rain, but I'm out here. I got my little heater on my jacket and I'm good.

[00:20:35] **David Crabill:** So you must have established a pretty good reputation of reliably being out there with cookies.

[00:20:41] **Whitney Singletary:** Yes, everyone they know. And lately people are, since the COVID hit, everybody knows that they can just order. Even though I already had a website where people can order before, but since everybody was doing a lot of pre-ordering, they have been doing it a lot more. So I'm like, yay. So sometimes I don't actually have to be out or set up to have customers cause they know, oh, it's during the normal business hours, she might not be set up, but she's still open.

And then they'll just go to the website, send me a text message. Say I'd like to order this or that. And they come pick it up or I'll go deliver it to them.

[00:21:15] **David Crabill:** So do you have a pretty good group of regular customers who come by?

[00:21:23] **Whitney Singletary:** Yes, I do. So they're so regular that I remember them by their cookies. And it was like, they're like, oh, well that cookie I used to get, like, it's this one. And they're like, oh yes, that's right. That's the one. This wife used to come by all the time. And she could never remember which cookie her husband likes when she's trying to treat him to a cookie.

And she goes, you remember the cookie my husband likes, that's one I want. And I'm like, Yup, that's the one. And every time I get it right,

[00:21:53] **David Crabill:** So how many cookies do you manage to sell on a daily basis?

[00:21:59] **Whitney Singletary:** it depends on the day. Sometimes I can make between 240 to 350 cookies.

[00:22:08] **David Crabill:** Wow. And what are you pricing them at?

[00:22:11] **Whitney Singletary:** \$3 each.

[00:22:12] **David Crabill:** How big are the cookies?

[00:22:15] **Whitney Singletary:** they range in size from about three inches diameter to about maybe four inches.

[00:22:23] **David Crabill:** Are they pretty weighty? Like heavy cookies?

[00:22:27] **Whitney Singletary:** Oh yeah. They got some weight to them. I would say except For the, for the Mo'Butter. That one's thin and crispy, the Mo'Butter's like almost five inches wide because this.

[00:22:37] **David Crabill:** so you're making, you know, over about over 700 bucks a day.

[00:22:42] **Whitney Singletary:** Yep. Some days. Yeah. And then some days it's slow And then it'd be like, I'll make like 50 cookies. And so it kind of balances itself out at the end of the week. I'm like, oh, I made 50 cookies today. Then tomorrow I'll make 600. And then I'm like, oh, yay.

[00:22:58] **David Crabill:** And you're, you're open every day of the week.

[00:23:01] **Whitney Singletary:** I am Monday through Friday,

[00:23:02] **David Crabill:** So which weekdays are the biggest in terms of sales and which ones at least.

[00:23:09] **Whitney Singletary:** Monday. Friday, usually my busiest out the whole week, I find that Friday is everybody trying to get cookies before I'm

closed on Saturday and then over the weekend. Cause I'm closed on Saturday and Sunday, people are like put their orders in. So when Monday comes, it's just a whole bunch of, we didn't have cookies for the weekend.

So now we're flooding you on Monday and then middle of the week is kind of slow. Thursday is the slowest, and so I'm like today is one of those days where I can do like housework. So in between sales, in between going out, I can make all the cookies I need and still do other stuff around the house. On my slow days.

[00:23:47] **David Crabill:** and I saw, even though you're, you know, a single mom with two kids and you're open five days a week you know, for what five hours, at least you also offer delivery.

[00:23:58] **Whitney Singletary:** Yes. I offered delivery and I was offering delivery before I had a car. I was walking all over the. It was like, people going, do you eat your cookies? Cause you look so slim. I'm like, I eat my cookies all the time, but I walk all over Berkeley. And if you ever been up to the Berkeley Hills, you can see why I burn off 2000 calories. Just making a delivery.

[00:24:23] **David Crabill:** Oh, wow.

[00:24:26] **Whitney Singletary:** I was offering delivery. I still offer delivery. I have a vehicle now. But I still walk for some of them.

[00:24:33] **David Crabill:** you got to charge a lot for, you know, that, that walk.

[00:24:37] **Whitney Singletary:** Yeah. Uh, Some, some people, it pays to get more because I offer free delivery, if you order stuff that's a \$24 or more, but if you ordering three cookies, it's a \$5 delivery fee. It's just flat \$5 for me to just bring it to you. And some people don't mind, it's weird and just for a person to just buy two cookies and then they'll pay the delivery fee and I'm like well you might as well just get more cookies, but I'm not going to complain. I'm going to bring them to you.

[00:25:05] **David Crabill:** your price of \$3. Is that something you've experimented with and what was it when you started out?

[00:25:12] **Whitney Singletary:** When I first started out, I had a lot of. Pull back in regards to people for like \$3 for a one cookie. I kind of priced out?

all the other bakeries and they sell some bakeries sell a cookie for \$4.25. And some sell them for \$3.75, there's some that sell them for \$2.50. So I said, I felt that based off of me breaking down the cost of all of my ingredients and still being able to make a little profit, that \$3 seem to be fair compared to all the quality ingredients that I use for the cookies.

And so. People find that if I was in a brick and mortar, no one complained about it. When I had a shop, of the three, but being in the driveway, they expect them to be a dollar. so sometimes I kind of get \$3 for one cookie. I'll just buy one and then they'll buy one, go and they'll turn around, come right back.

Oh, those were really good and buy some more. And so no one lately. No one's been complaining because they're competitive. My prices are the same as almost everybody else who sells in Berkeley for just a chocolate chip cookie is going to be \$3. So why not get a gourmet nut butter cookie, like a macadamia cookie, and it's \$3. It can get something different.

[00:26:29] **David Crabill:** yeah, I was going to say, you know, your, your cookies are so unique, you should be able to charge more for them. And I would imagine that some of those nuts are a lot more expensive than others, but you just charge \$3 flat for all of them.

[00:26:41] **Whitney Singletary:** That is true. Uh, Some of them, the prices vary, so when it's, for example, my most expensive one is not the pine nut. It's actually the cashew

because I use dry roasted salted cashews. when I had first started, I wanted to make sure to be aware of allergens. So I'll look at all the ingredients, even the ingredients on nuts by themselves. And it turns out that cashews were roasted in peanut oil, which makes no sense to me. But I said, we can't have a cashew butter cookie and it has peanuts in it.

So we're not going to do that. And I found that dry roasted nuts don't have any other oils. No filler oils, no soybean oil, no sunflower seed oil, no other nut oil is just the nut. And so the cashews that are dry roasted are very expensive, they're almost \$18 a bag, but the flavor is wonderful.

[00:27:38] **David Crabill:** you would hope so. So you, I know you started with the events, you went to the doing stuff out in front of your home. But then where'd you go from there? You're looking into a storefront. You tried to get into one. How did that go?

[00:27:52] **Whitney Singletary:** Yeah. I tried to get into a store for a couple of times. The first one was in 2017. I'm like okay I got a nice following of customers. I'm making some nice money. I had saved up some money, so I can get into a spot to have enough money to, for the equipment, refrigerator, stove, et cetera. And I raised all that money, myself selling in my driveway.

So I'm like, yay. I inquired into some properties that they were for lease for rent. And it turns out that they're like, oh no, we don't want to rent to you. Nobody want to rent to you. And I'm like, why. And so I got a lot of red tape and dead ends. Again, the persistently stubborn part comes in and I'm like, oh, tell me, no, I'll keep my money to myself.

I'm not going to not sell because you told me no. And so it just took a little bit longer, but eventually in 2019 I found the spot that was willing to rent to me. As long as I proved that I had six months worth of rent on reserve in my account before they decided to rent to me, I said, And I ended up renting establishment, which was nice, except for they left out some key things there with the whole reason why I wanted to get another spot was

so I could have a commercial kitchen and this place was supposed to be converted to have a commercial kitchen. And it was all written down and all promised and all this stuff that was in the lease. And then afterwards, they kind of was like, oh, well we changed our mind. We don't really want to do that anymore.

So now I have a storefront and I'm still selling, making the cookies at home and then taking them to the storefront. Cause now I'm locked into this lease and I'm like, it didn't COVID so I'm like, ah, do I keep doing, or let this go. So I ended up letting my shop go and then went back to the driveway and I was making money in the driveway to pay the rent for the shop over there because the city officials said, Hey, all nonessential food places, like a bakery, to be closed unless you sell outdoors.

And it made no sense for me to pay rent, to be on a sidewalk that has no room down away from my house when I can just make the cookies at home. And then sell it in my driveway again, and that's kind of where we ended back up.

[00:30:10] **David Crabill:** Yeah. I mean, that's, that's pretty crazy that you had to go back to your home and still pay rent for the storefront. But going back to when you started the storefront, I mean, was that kind of a dream for you to, to be, you know, on a street,

[00:30:24] **Whitney Singletary:** It was definitely the, the first step of where I wanted to move. In the direction I want to be because I didn't, my whole vision is not to actually just rent a spot. I want a full sweetery, and in the sweetery, I want to be able to make my cookies on site and make the other things I want to add to my line, like the fudge and the brittle, and be able to make all of those things on something that I own.

And so baby steps getting up to that would be renting a spot and building more following, getting more people coming in and being more awareness of the company. So we can save money to get to the next spot that's mine. And it just having the shop, taking away the money that wasn't going to be able to be made, because it's very limited when I only have a regular residential oven, so my profits are limited as well. Cause I can't make as many cookies as I could in a commercial oven versus my regular oven. And so having them take back what they promised to do, kind of put me at a disadvantage. So it was like, okay, now I'm making the same amount of money I would in my driveway, in my shop.

Only difference now is half of my profits goes to rent. And so then I was like, that's not what I wanted to do. The shop itself was nice. I ended up painting the building myself because they didn't do that. This is fine. Cause I like to paint and they just subtracted it from the amount of rent.

It was just a lot of stuff that was just unnecessary that took away the fun of finally being able to say, I got my first shop and I was like, yes, I was there. I let all of my people know, like we're no longer in the driveway, we're over here now. And they're like, yes, we're so happy for you. And they all came to support new customers, found me, cause they're like, oh, we never knew about you ever go to the other cookie shop.

And they're like, you know, there's another cookie shop. I'm like, I know they got the shop that I wanted last year. They told me they didn't want cookies at this particular shop. The owner didn't want to convert the spot into a bakery. And that's why they denied my application for renting that spot. And then a couple of months later, it gets turned into an actual bakery.

And it's like, okay, I don't get it. It was like, you guys literally did the exact same thing I had wanted to do and people sell cookies too. So I was like, wow, this is very questionable behavior that out of all the places to sell cookies, they happen to get the same spot that I had just inquired and now they're cookies there, but it's okay because they don't have what I have when my customers went in there to inquire.

And it's always interesting when I made myself my cookies so complicated. So filled in all the boxes. If you can say that it would be so difficult for anyone to want to copy me, or, if they were to figure out how to make it, when they look at the prices on some of the ingredients. They wouldn't be able to just, they're not going to want to do that, to discourage anyone from copycats because people do that.

And they tried it. Those people like they tried to make a Walnut cookie. And it literally had like a couple of pieces of walnuts on top. And I was like, wow. And I only know this because my customer had saw the cookie shop and remembered I was going to get that cookie shop and they're like, oh, we went in there and they're like, it's not you, but it's someone else selling cookies, but they bought the cookie and brought it to me to show me. I don't know why they brought it to show me, but they're like, Hey, look, we'll just look like they're copying you. And I'm like, that's not a copy. That's just a regular cookie with walnuts. I said, that's not a nut. That's not an us. It doesn't advertise as a nut butter cookie. It's just a walnut cookie, but more like a sugar cookie with walnuts. And then they undersell me. That's fine too. Cause my customers, if they want what they want people go where they go. Like, there's enough people where we don't have to undercut each other? And there's enough people who like what they like and people go where they want to go. And so we don't have to steal customers from others to do that.

And I find that my customers come to me when they want to get a cookie, they want to save 25 cents. Then they can go to the other spot and get their cookies. I don't have a problem with that. Or they can spend an extra 25 cents for \$3 and then get my cookies. It's like, it's a difference of 25 cents, it's not that big of a difference.

that's the only challenge I've been having lately is them. I'm like, I don't know why, but during COVID. I was still open. Because of my licensing that requires me to have certain packaging and a certain weight to have to sell my stuff and disclose certain ingredients. I was already prepared to doing the outdoor, the mobile vending, the setup breakdown.

I was prepared for all that because I had already I'm used to it. So when COVID hit and everybody was all struggling and trying to figure out how to stay open, how to transform from being indoors to outdoors, where they're all trying to figure that out. I was already doing it. So I'm like, yay. So all the other bakeries that were trying to undercut me all closed because they couldn't figure out how to adjust and adapt to the new way of selling cookies during the pandemic. But I was like, I'm thriving

[00:35:52] **David Crabill:** So you were doing better than ever after COVID hit.

[00:35:56] **Whitney Singletary:** Yes, during COVID. It was sad because. All of the funding that was available. I was denied for, because I did better in COVID time than I did the previous year. And so it was, they're like, oh, because you made more money than you made last year. You don't qualify for this because it's for people who were struggling during COVID I'm like, well, technically we were, but we still did better.

And I was like, wow, a lot of red tape in small print all over the place. And you don't find out about none of that until you get ready to inquire. And you're told, no, you don't, you don't qualify for this. Cause you don't have more than two employees, but you're still a business. You have a business license.

You have a health permit, have a zoning certificate. You have everything businesses have, but you don't have any employees, so you don't qualify. And it's like, oh, okay.

But that's okay because. And like I said, I'm very good at getting around all of this red tape and making it happen,

[00:37:02] **David Crabill:** I feel like as I hear more of your story, I, hear a common theme of persistence and just overcoming a lot of obstacles. Have there been any other obstacles that you faced getting this going.

[00:37:18] **Whitney Singletary:** Oh yes. There's still a lot of different obstacles. It's like even let's just say back in 2017, I had got a flu shot that went wrong. I was convinced, oh, let's go get a flu shot because you're going to be exposed to people, it's flu season. I'm like, okay, I'm going.

to go ahead and I'll do that. But is the person who gave me the vaccine, he injected it in the wrong spot.

And so he injected it into my versus sack. So I ended up losing the whole left use of my left arm, the whole arm, which is, it was dead. Basically. I was like, wow. It turns out I had a severe case of bursitis in my left shoulder due to the improper injection. And I had six months of physical therapy to regain mobility back in my arm.

And it's like, I can't even do anything right now. I can't even hug my kids. I can't do my hair. I can't clean the house. I can't bake. Cause I can't even hold my mixing bowl or nothing. It was just like, it was terrible. I felt so discouraged. It's

like, what am I going to do? It was like, I'm going to, I'm going to take care of me.

And my kids, it was like the money I had saved up to get to the next stage. It was like, yay. I'm so glad I finally saved up enough for all the equipment I need. And then that arm injury, and now like, had to dip into living off of that for, until it was almost all gone while I'm going through physical therapy.

So I can get my arm back. Right. Again, it's still not quite right. Even when it's cold, it'll start having phantom pains all over again, but I just got to fight through it.

[00:39:00] **David Crabill:** It's crazy. and I saw that you somebody tried terrain you in for being illegal at one point

[00:39:08] **Whitney Singletary:** Yes. I think I know for a fact that is definitely was my next door neighbor. Because over the years I find that they like to complain. He's like one of those grumpy pants, that's what I call him. Kind of like a Scrooge where if something is, people are laughing, stop all that laughing. Why are you laughing?

So loud type of person? I didn't know that person was that way. Cause I wasn't doing anything wrong, I felt that being neighborly. Cause that's where I'm from. Bakersfield. People are neighborly. So if you had a problem with me selling cookies in my own driveway and we were laughing too loud, then I felt that he could have said something to me instead of calling the police.

And then making up a story to get the police to come. And so when the police come, they're like, we heard that someone who was selling illegally, do you have permission to be here? And I'm like, permission to be here? I didn't understand. I'm like, what do you mean have permission to be here? I live here and they're like, Oh, can you prove that you live here?

And I showed them my ID and just showed that I live here. And it is a whole unnecessary hassle and the cops were like, Are these regular cookies? And I'm like, yes, well that's a technical question. Cause I make non-traditional cookies. So I don't want to be smart about it because they're not regular, but I think he was implying were they edibles.

Without actually just saying, are these edibles? And so it was just kind of a weird situation, but the cookie itself was like so good because this officer that came to inquire about the complaint of the noise complaint. And the officer, I

gave him a cookie, the pistachio butter cookie, and he was sitting in his car and he was eating his cookie and he comes back over and he was like, oh, this is a really good cookie.

And he said, you've got a customer for life and it kind of backfired and the person who called, I don't know if they just wanted me to shut down just because they just didn't want me there. Or they were really concerned about the laughing. Cause we were really laughing cause something funny and we were just cracking up and I don't know, but that officer told all the other officers.

And so it was very interesting to see a police cars constantly pulling over getting cookies. Cause I have curbside service. And so there's a fire engine pulling over and police cars. And it's funny to me. I still never get used to seeing them pull over and they're like, Hey, can I get two of these, or two of those?

It's like, oh sure. Okay. And it's like free security, cause sometimes they'll come and sit at night when I'm out there and they'll be eating their cookie while they're on a break. And then if someone looks like they're up to no good or deterred from doing anything illegal in the presence of the police. So it's nice to have them sitting around sometimes.

[00:41:59] **David Crabill:** so the cops eat a lot of cookies, huh?

[00:42:02] **Whitney Singletary:** Yes, Berkeley cops don't eat donuts, they eat cookies.

[00:42:06] **David Crabill:** Now I did see that you started a fundraiser. Can you talk a little bit about that?

[00:42:11] **Whitney Singletary:** Yeah, back there in COVID. I wanted to do my part to give back because I felt that a lot of my customers were helping me along. They were doing a lot of the who, you know, need some help type things. So when I started the, Comfort Cookies for Caregivers. And I was watching the news a lot of people, giving out free meals, restaurants, and people were buying from the restaurants to stay afloat, but no one was offering any dessert because all of the dessert places were all closed up except for me.

And so I said, Hey, we can do a fundraiser. It will also keep us afloat and people can get cookies. So I donated to a couple of little community centers

local clinics. And I donated some to the hospital and the nurses that will come to my establishment, they got free cookies doctors who came by, they got free cookies.

So it turned out, was really nice that people were donating often. Yes, I was able to stay afloat and give back at the same time. So nice and build more awareness that people who didn't even know about us, it was like, oh, here's a new company.

I'm like not really new, but I'm going to go with it.

[00:43:18] **David Crabill:** yeah, that's cool. and I see that you're trying to expand your product line.

[00:43:24] **Whitney Singletary:** Yes. I wanted to keep the nut things going and again, doing something different than everybody else. It's like people have cookies, ice cream, I don't want cookies, ice cream. I want cookies and candy. I'm like my other two favorite things: nut fudges and nut brittle s. So I'm like, Hey, where can you go to get a nice piece of fresh fudge anywhere in this bay area, And that comes to mind is going to be difficult for other people to find those things. So they have no choice, but to get them for me. And I have a family recipe,

[00:43:59] **David Crabill:** from your great, great, great grandmother.

[00:44:01] **Whitney Singletary:** it was from my grand auntie. I don't know it might've came from her, her grandmother or her grandmother.

I'm not sure, but I know for a fact that it was her fudge and her brittle that she used to make keep that going. And I was like, Ooh, I can make that recipe and incorporate a lot of the new nuts because she only made peanut butter brittle.

And that was it. It was the best peanut butter brittle ever. And I said, I can so bake this peanut butter brittle because you want a brittle to be crispy because sometimes when you bite into it, it's really, really hard if they don't make it right. And then sometimes you bite into it and it's chewy and it's not how it's supposed to be.

Her brittle was always right at the perfect of crispiness, just enough crunch, right. It's crunchy, but it's not going to break your teeth type crunchy. And so I'm looking forward to adding that to the line. hopefully this fall, I can introduce the first two flavors of the brittle and the fudge.

[00:44:56] **David Crabill:** Um, And I meant to ask you about your packaging. It looks pretty unique.

[00:45:02] **Whitney Singletary:** Yes. The packaging. Uh, I am compliant. They are compostable biodegradable bags. And so they're, they're green and it's nice, but they keep the preserve the freshness of the quality of the cookies. So I can make a cookie in the morning, put them in those bags and they'll last two days without changing the flavor of the cookie and then, cause they're good, I can just take the label off, throw it in your compost bin or throw it in the recycle.

[00:45:32] **David Crabill:** where do you get those bags from and how much do they cost?

[00:45:36] **Whitney Singletary:** I buy them online and let's see price check was a \$12 a case, which is not a lot, but I use a lot of cases. So it adds up

[00:45:50] **David Crabill:** Well, how, how many of these, pouches are in a case.

[00:45:54] **Whitney Singletary:** uh, You get about a hundred.

[00:45:55] **David Crabill:** And where do you remember where online you buy them from?

[00:45:59] **Whitney Singletary:** Oh Yeah, I get them from a company called Nashville Wraps. I've been using that company since my old company I've been using them for years.

[00:46:09] **David Crabill:** So over the last six years that you've been running this business? Are there any moments that really stand out to you

[00:46:16] **Whitney Singletary:** You know, I'll have to say there was this one moment last year when I was figuring out what our next moves were going to be during the pandemic being able to adjust was one thing. But when the store started putting rations on. What I could buy. It was like, okay, now here's now reality has kicked in.

I can't buy more than one butter because I'm hoarding it. I can't buy a big bag of sugar anymore because they're rationing it. And so it was nice that the community was all like, what can we help you do? We don't want nothing butter cookies to go under, like all these other companies, what can we do? And I told

people, well, only think I really need help with right now is like trying to find another spot to find flour, eggs, and sugar.

Cause I can't even make the cookies. I figured out where I can go to back to the driveway to sell these cookies. But now I can't even buy ingredients because they won't let me buy more than one box of butter at a time. And so it was really touching that a lot of my neighbors all chipped in and I woke up one day to a knock at the door and it was like butter and there was bags of flour and sugar, just small little bags that people all just donated to me.

I was like, tears. I felt really loved. I felt the community loved me for, for reals. Yeah, it was nice.

[00:47:37] **David Crabill:** Yeah, it's very cool. And back when the pandemic hit and you went back to selling in front of your home and now that you know how everything turned out, do you regret moving into your own storefront a few months earlier? Cause it sounds like it became kind of an expensive decision.

[00:47:55] **Whitney Singletary:** No, I don't make any regrets in life. I find that everything's a learning lesson. And I find that having that shop only made me more aware for the next shop, that it needs to have everything already in it. So can't no one pull a fast one and say, oh yeah, we're going to do this. And then change your mind later.

That is what I've learned from that. And so for me, it was An experience, but it was really good experience too. Cause it was nice to be able to have the recognition. It was like, oh, you were in the driveway. You've been working hard to get to this point and you're finally made it to this point.

It's just unfortunate that as soon as you made it to this point, a global pandemic took place and you kind of let that point go, but we can always get back there again.

[00:48:42] **David Crabill:** Well moving forward, where do you see this business going?

[00:48:46] **Whitney Singletary:** the main goal for Nuttin' Butter Cookies is having my own establishment. And when I say that is, my customers are already ready for it, but spoiler, I've been working on trying to get a drive-thru. And that is what I wanted to have. And that is the official goal. So it's not just the actual bakery where people come in and get stuff, which they can, but I wanted to have it where

we become walk up to a window, get your stuff like foster freeze. Or you can kind of come in, like Weinerschnitzel and do a little drive through. And it's just nothing but cookies and stuff that goes with the cookies, right? Where can you go at 10 o'clock at night to get some fresh baked cookies and candy and a milk and just drive through you don't have to get out.

So that is the end goal that's taking baby steps to get toward, and we're getting there. We're getting there eventually.

[00:49:42] **David Crabill:** Well, it seems like you've overcome a lot to get to this point. And there's certainly a lot of roadblocks that stood in your way. What keeps you moving forward in this journey? Why are you so passionate about this business?

[00:49:56] **Whitney Singletary:** I find that you do what makes you happy? And baking makes me happy this behind the scenes red tape that most people don't know about. It's just my own personal thing that I have to deal with, but being able to do what I love doing every day motivates me and my kids see their mother, my boys, they see moms.

I look, mom's not a quitter. Mom goes after what she wants. And she does that. So that is what I'm teaching them, that whatever you want to do, they always tell you, you can do whatever you want to be. You can be whatever you want to be. All those things when you're growing up. But a lot of people don't really do it.

And I find that for me I was like, look, I wanted to be a baker. I wanted to invent something that makes people happy. Baking makes me happy. That is what I want to do. And. No, one's going to stop me from doing that. If I was baking with one arm, I'm not there in the rain, I'm going to do it because I am passionate about it and I'm not going to stop doing it just because it gets hard.

It just makes me want to do it more because eventually it's not going to always be hard.

[00:51:03] **David Crabill:** Well, I would say it's impressive what you have accomplished thus far, and I'm looking forward to seeing where you go in the future. Um, But thanks for coming on the show today, if people would like to learn more about you or um, reach out, how can they get.

[00:51:19] **Whitney Singletary:** Uh, The easiest way is to go to the website. It has All the information. All the social media, the phone numbers how to order and the website is www.nuttinbuttercookies.com.

[00:51:33] **David Crabill:** All right. Yeah. And I see links to your social pages down at the bottom of the website and a way to contact you. But yeah. Thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today.

[00:51:45] **Whitney Singletary:** All right, Thank you for having me.

[00:51:46] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager podcast.

For more information about this episode, go to forrager.com/podcast/47.

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Thanks for listening. And I'll see you in the next episode.