

Top Business Tips For Cottage Food Entrepreneurs with Facebook Groups Owners

David Crabill: Welcome to episode 50 of the Forrager podcast. I'm David Crabill, and today I have a very special episode for you. I actually don't just have one guest on today. I have 16 guests on today and not just anyone, but some of the most knowledgeable people about the cottage food industry are on the show. Today, for this special 50th episode, I asked people who run Facebook groups that support the cottage food industry to come on and share their best tips for cottage food entrepreneurs who are either starting out or trying to grow their businesses.

Now, if you've listened to a number of the episodes, you'll notice that many of my podcasts guests have mentioned Facebook groups on their episode and mentioned how important they were as they started and grew their businesses. And I really think of Facebook groups as just being that glue that holds our cottage food community together.

They provide support and a place for people to connect. And so I don't know if you know this, but running a Facebook group is actually quite a lot of work. Uh, just managing the spam alone is a task in and of itself. But a lot of people who run these Facebook groups, they don't get compensated for their efforts. And oftentimes they're behind the scenes supporting others. And in some cases, even putting their own business dreams on the sidelines so that they can support other entrepreneurs. so I thought, you know, episode 50 would be a good place to not only tap into the collective information that these Facebook group owners have, which is immense, But also recognize what they have done to support our industry. I hope that you'll not only get a ton of great advice from this episode, but also learn more about these groups that are supporting our industry so that you can hopefully go over and join them and get the support that you need to either start or continue growing your cottage food business.

So with that, let's jump right into this episode and we're going to start off with Heather and Corrie miracle, AKA the miracle twins. They run the Sugar Cookie Marketing Facebook group.

They also have a very popular podcast, And I actually knew that I would be putting them first because a few months ago I actually reached out to my audience and I asked them which Facebook group has been the most helpful to

them, because I wanted to know which Facebook groups to include on this episode. And of course, many different Facebook groups were mentioned as being people's favorite. But the one that cropped up the most was Heather and Corrie's sugar cookie marketing group. And in the process of creating this episode, I actually joined their group and I haven't spent that much time in it, but from the amount of time that I have spent in there, I will tell you, wow, that is a very active group.

It is alive. And it's kind of amazing to see how much people are sharing in that group and what Heather and Corrie do to support it. so clearly they're doing something right. and with that, let's hear from Heather and Corrie.

[00:03:06] **Heather Miracle:** Hey, this is Heather with Sugar Cookie Marketing, and this is the twin sister, Corrie best is first, second, best is after anyways. Thank you so much, David, for having us on your 50th podcast. Congratulations. If I could have a tip and then Corrie is going to have a tip, a less great tip. My tip would be coming up with a content strategy that means sitting down.

Figuring out who exactly your target audience is and creating content for them. A lot of times, we just think I'm going to set it and forget it and post whatever's on my phone. But when we can think about the copy and how it relates to our audience and how they want to receive that information, we can have more of a direction with the content that we post and wherever there's a strategy, there's usually the ability to track it.

So we understand what we're doing, why we're doing it and how it performs. We can continue to tweak it along the way. To create a really great strategy for our social media content. That's my tip. Corrie, what's your tip?

[00:03:57] **Corrie Miracle:** Um, going off of what Heather just said, great tip twin, try saying that five times fast, um, with a great content strategy, you actually need a great photography and photography while it seems daunting.

Think about it. Um, it's actually easier to do than you think if you find a good light source, indirect natural light, go to that big window in your house, that bay window, um, and set your stage up there. You can actually really get some fantastic photos that showcase what you do best in add value to it.

So when you're building out your content schedule, you are actually working smarter and not necessarily as harder, um, because you're making your photography work for you.

[00:04:37] **Heather Miracle:** Another great tip. I'm going to tag a tag onto Corrie's is when you do go take those photos, take multiple versions of your set. That way you can get more content runtime.

And what I say by that is if you spend all this time making an absolutely amazing dozen of custom decorated cookies, but only grab one photo, your feed could start looking a little redundant. Now, when we snag a bunch of photos, let's say we shoot for 10 per set. We can do close up, zoomed out a focus cookie, a different focus, cookie, a different background, our packaging.

There's a lot more opportunity to make this content work for us. Hey, our goal is to be lazy marketers, but to be effective, lazy marketers. Right? Anyways, we're Heather and Corrie with the Sugar Cookie Marketing group. And David, super stoked for you. We are very proud. The Forrager website has been honestly just amazing resource.

So appreciate you having us and best of luck for the next 50.

[00:05:29] **David Crabill:** Great tips, twins. You probably noticed that they like to have fun with their content. but yeah, definitely social media is their bread and butter and great social media advice there. And I definitely agree with Corrie. It's really not that hard to improve your photos. Uh, it just takes a few minutes of time. And then Heather's advice about following a content strategy is definitely important. I would say most of my podcast guests that have done well with social media.

Follow a pretty specific content strategy, but you might be wondering what kind of strategies to follow. And that leads us right into our next guest. Kortney Carey. She runs a Facebook group called Cookie Society by Bakery Tee Co, And Kortney has a tip about how to create captivating social media content.

[00:06:20] **Kortney Carey:** Hey there. I'm Kortney Carey and I run the most amazing Facebook group, Cookie Society by Bakery Tee Co. In Cookie Society, we talk about all things, cookies and technique and packaging and marketing, but our specialty is social media content creation for your business. So one of my biggest tips for you as you start your cottage bakery, or as you continue to grow is create captivating content on your social media. The anatomy of a captivating caption is split into three parts, the hook, the value and the call to action. So number one is hook. So grab their attention, calling all moms. I can't believe I'm telling you this. I was today years old when I learned. Make this part fun or interesting so that they want to read on number two is values.

This is the meat of the caption. This is where you entertain, enlighten, educate, inform, or inspire your followers. Number three is call to action at the end. Tell your followers what to do next. For example. Answer my question, go to my website, tag, a friend, DM me, sign up for my newsletter. The call to action is important because it gives the reader a task.

And when they take action and they will, you can make a connection with them or even hello, a sale. I'm sorry, but a photo of a pretty cake with song lyrics for a caption might feel cute, but it won't create a real connection between you and your followers and a photo of cookies with like happy birthday, Tom, as a caption.

It's nice, but it's not very memorable and your followers are probably just going to scroll on, but when you use your brand voice and you tell stories and you're vulnerable and silly, and really allow your customers to know you and follow your baking journey, it's captivating. And that's when the magic happens.

That's when you'll really gain traction on social media and it's just magic. Okay. So, all right. Thank you friend. Be sure to join Cookie Society by Bakery Tee Co if this interests you, we have a. Content calendar that we put out full of daily writing prompts every single month. They inspire you to create captivating content on your social media pages. So we'll see you on the inside.

[00:08:31] **David Crabill:** Wow, Kortney packed a lot of information into that clip. And I think you're seeing, uh, from these first two clips that you want to be intentional with your marketing, you don't want to be random. And that people who tend to do better on social media do follow a specific strategy.

Now these first two clips were from groups that are dedicated to cookie makers, but I think you're seeing that you don't have to be a cookie maker to get value out of them. And actually I have two other Facebook groups on this episode that are dedicated to cookie makers. and similarly, I don't think you need to be a cookier in order to get value out of them. So up next, we have Nancy Westfall. she runs the Cookie-a-thon Facebook group. Let's listen in

[00:09:18] **Nancy Westfall:** Hello listeners. My name is Nancy Westfall. I am the owner of the colorful cookie and the colorful cookie club. I teach people how to design cookie stencils and cookie cutters. I'm also the creator of the Cookie-a-thon Facebook group and the live Cookie-a-thon event. I began decorating cookies about seven years ago, and I want to offer you some encouragement.

If you are thinking about starting your own cookie business. There are amazing things in store for you. It's so much fun to decorate cookies. And I always like to say that cookies are cathartic.

being creative is just good for the soul. Lots of new cookiers join our Cookie-a-thon Facebook group to learn new decorating techniques and find answers to their questions, questions like how do I get the right consistency of royal icing. Is there a rollout recipe that doesn't spread? Why am I getting butter bleed?

Or how do I get rid of those annoying air bubbles? How do you find customers? How do you take payments? Do you have customers prepay or do you have an order form that you're willing to share with me? Because I don't know what to put on mine. And then the big question, how do I price my cookies? That one's hard to answer.

That depends on the area where you live and, you know, it varies from place to place. So every beginner has questions like these. I had them too. We all do. So you just need to remember, you don't have to do things perfectly. You just have to do them. We were all beginners at one time and we all figured it out.

As we went. I remember obsessing over every single cookie I decorated. No one will even see what you think are mistakes on your cookies. Your customers will be so impressed. They'll say, oh my goodness, these cookies are too pretty to eat. You are going to figure out the answers as you go.

You don't have to know every single thing. If you try something and it doesn't work for you, try something else until it does work. Maybe custom orders are more than you can handle as a beginner. So try offering a specific set of. And offer a pre-sale or maybe three sets of cookies that you pre-sell that way you'll know exactly how much ingredients you'll need and how many cookies you'll need to bake and decorate.

And you can set the limit on your sales and choose the designs. According to your skill level, this will really help your stress because custom orders, um, can be. very nerve-wracking if you're a beginner. So the first steps are the hardest. It may be intimidating. You just have to be willing to. Begin look for cookie decorating Facebook groups, like our Cookie-a-thon group.

Our group is an encouraging online community for sugar cookie decorators. We share tons of cookie decorating ideas, helpful tips, recipes, and answers to cookie decorating questions. We have created friendships with people from

around the world who share our same interests. This group is also where the much loved cookie-a-thon events happened in the spring.

And then also in November that's holiday cookie-a-thon. We have two holiday cookie-a-thon and spring cookie-a-thon. So it's very helpful. It's a huge group of virtual cookie friends, and we would love to have you come and join us there.

[00:12:39] **David Crabill:** Nancy shared a lot of great advice in that clip. And I got the sense that she sees a lot of people come through her Facebook group that don't feel like they're worthy, they're beginners, or they're not good enough. And I see this a lot, you know, not just with cookie decorators, all forms of cottage food businesses that people have, this fear that their products aren't good enough to sell.

And so I think her advice is really spot on and just making sure you keep moving forward and don't get in your own way. Now, I first heard about Nancy's group when Debbie George recommended it on episode 30, Debbie actually had a lot of great recommendations in her episode. And one of them was also Dotty Raleigh's Facebook group and she is up next. Dotty runs the Facebook group Cookies As Business with Sugar Dot Let's listen in and hear what she has to share.

[00:13:40] **Dotty Raleigh:** My name is Dotty Raleigh with Sugar Dot Cookies. And my Facebook group is Cookies As Business with Sugar Dot. My tip for you today is to respect yourself as a small business owner and the entrepreneur that you are, you are not air quotes, a hobby baker. It doesn't matter if this is a side hustle. It doesn't matter if you're working out of your home kitchen.

It doesn't matter if you have little ones at your feet, it doesn't matter if you have loved ones that aren't supportive or belittle, what you do. You are a small business owner, as long as you have things set up properly with your cottage, food laws and any licensing that you may need. All of that, you are just as legit as the bakery down the street, you are a small business.

If you have that hobby baker mentality, I hope that you're able to adjust it, respect yourself. And it's going to show in the communications with your customers. It's going to show in the policies that you have set and how you stick to them. It's going to show in your pricing and before long, you won't be the only one respecting you and your business. Others will too.

[00:15:00] **David Crabill:** Dotty's advice speaks to me personally, because it's something I've had to learn big time over the years, she's really talking about

mindset and how, the way you think about yourself as a business owner affects everything that you do in your business. And actually a couple other of the Facebook group owners on this episode echoed that same idea of that you need to take yourself really seriously as a business.

Next up, we have Kristi Hall. She runs the Facebook group called We Are Home Business Bakers, which was actually also recommended on an episode that was the most recent episode, episode 49 with Tracy Mancuso. So let's listen in to Kristi.

[00:15:48] **Kristi Hall:** Hello, bakers. I am so happy to be here today. My name is Kristi Hall. I am the founder of We are Home business Bakers Facebook group, which focuses on creating a support system for cottage bakers. The best tip I can provide for anyone who wants to start or grow their baking business is to invest in your business.

And in yourself, whether it's an Ateco cake, turntable, top of the line, piping bags or food gels, the tools you use can improve your skills, tremendously investing in yourself and in your craft is imperative taking some online classes that have live instructors. Helping you along the way. It's so much better than trying to figure out from YouTube, how a certain technique is done.

Having someone live to help you makes all the difference. There are so many great online classes, no matter what skill you're trying to improve, there's a class for you. I remember trying to take those YouTube classes, screaming at the computer, turn your cake. What's that stop. And of course they didn't listen.

So those are my best tips. Invest in your business, invest in yourself and you will improve so much.

[00:17:13] **David Crabill:** Again, I can totally relate. It took me a long time to start really investing in my business. And, uh, I do see that mistake from a lot of entrepreneurs as well. Uh, it was only a couple of years ago that I finally got a business coach to help me. Cause I thought, oh, I could probably figure all this out myself.

But, yeah, there's not really much to replace, following in the footsteps of someone who has gone before you and learned the hard way. Um, and certainly someone that could speak to that would be Sari Kimbell, who is up next. And she is a business coach. her Facebook group is called food business success. She's got a podcast as well. She actually had me on her podcast about a year ago and she has a YouTube channel. So she's got a lot of information out. there for

free, She echoes a lot of these same ideas in her clip, but she is a farmers market expert. So she adds some market specific ideas in her clip. So let's listen in.

[00:18:16] **Sari Kimbell:** Hey there. I'm Sari Kimbell. I am the founder of Food Business Success, and we have a private Facebook group as well. And we definitely attract a lot of cottage food folks, looking to grow, and I'm also a farmer's market manager. So that gives me a really interesting perspective. And so my tip is about being willing to spend a little bit, make an investment in your marketing.

Don't forget about how important your marketing is when you go to a farmer's market. Um, having really appropriate signage, telling people the price and having it be big, having it be colorful. having it look as professional as possible. I see a really big difference in vendors who do put a little bit more, of an investment, a little bit more thought, into having a great booth and yes, you need a great product.

Of course. I think of one of my bakers who does like macarons.

And they have invested in a really beautiful logo and they have a nice pull-up banner, wild bakery is their name. And, it really does make a big difference. I also think of healthy hobo is another great one. And she's put some money, a little bit of investment into a nice

tablecloth and some signage that's explaining all of the ingredients and what, why they're so special. it really helps tell your story. It helps people sort of evaluate your booth. there is something psychologically about. putting that extra touch on it, right? That professionalism the beautiful signage.

Now, I just want to caution you to not get yourself too overworked that it has to be over the top. There is a happy medium, uh, you can always get started and then evolve from there and make it better and better. But don't overlook this area and how important it is, um, to making those sales and to having people trust you.

That's such a big piece with cottage food, right? So having people trust you, and feel good about, buying your product made out of your home kitchen. And so having that little bit of investment will go a long way. All right. Congratulations, David, on episode 50, that's so exciting. Thanks for showing up and serving this community. I love it.

[00:20:40] **David Crabill:** Definitely branding can make a big difference, especially as you're trying to grow your business. And I do want to reiterate what Sari mentioned at the end there, which is it is a balancing act. You don't want to get too worked up over this. I see a lot of people who try to make their branding perfect from day one.

And it is an iterative process. You start with something kind of like Nancy was saying, it probably is not going to look perfect at the beginning, but that's okay. And you just keep iterating as you grow your business.

And continuing with the branding piece up next, we have Cyd Mitchell. She runs a Facebook group, Sweet Success Project. And Cyd actually like Sari has a lot of content online. Uh, that helps entrepreneurs. I know she not only has a sweet success project, but she's got the sugar coin academy. She also has Sweet Fest, which is an organization that helps entrepreneurs. So I think she runs a conference as well. So she's got a lot of content and information out there helping support entrepreneurs.

And in her tips today, she shares some information about how to brand yourself online.

[00:21:48] **Cyd Mitchell:** Hey there. My name is Cyd Mitchell and I run the sweet success project on Facebook. And my main tip for anyone who wants to start running a cottage food business is that it's never too soon to start building your online brand. And more specifically, I want to touch on websites and building your email list as it relates to websites.

Did you know that you can purchase a domain name before you're ready to actually create a website? I met so many folks who are new in business who think that they have to wait to purchase a domain name until they are ready to start building their website. And that is completely false. In fact, I highly encourage anyone who knows that they want to have a website for their business sometime in the future to purchase a domain name as soon as possible so that you can secure the name before someone else buys it before you.

Once you purchase your domain name, you can either sit on it and wait until you're ready to build a site, but you can also use it to direct traffic to your most popular social media page. This process is called domain forwarding. And if you purchase your domain from GoDaddy or Bluehost, you simply need to do a search on their support page to find out how to implement the process.

It's called domain forwarding. Okay, essentially, this allows you to use your domain name in your marketing materials and online to build your name. Even before you're ready for a website, simply have your domain name forwarded to your Instagram or Facebook or whatever. Social media app is the most popular. Also as more and more states are removing the prohibition for online sales and the cottage food space.

You definitely want to be prepared for the day that you decide to take the leap and create a website to promote your business. When it comes to building an email list, I can't stress enough, how important emails are to any online business. Tons of businesses are super reliant on social media, and that can be a dangerous thing because what happens when those apps no longer exist or lose popularity or even worse, what will happen if your account ever gets hacked or you lose access?

Look, I can tell you from personal experience, it's a nightmare. Like. In maybe October, November of 2019, I was running Facebook ads and my account was hacked and I became the victim of bank fraud. And when I tell you it was a nightmare, it was, I ended up losing access to my Facebook account and all of the followers on my business account were.

Fortunately, I had the foresight to make connections with my audience outside of the app. So all hope wasn't lost. However, had I not prioritized the email list building part of my business years ago, I would have been totally up a Creek. And as of this current recording, I still don't have access to that original Facebook page.

And it has taken me this long to regain enough confidence to rebuild my presence on that app. However, as I watch folks panic, when apps are temporarily glitch out for a few hours and they can't share anything or the algorithm doesn't like them anymore, I'm reminded just how important it is to build connections outside of the apps, as an insurance policy for the.

Okay, so you can easily start building an email list in your business by creating an account on a platform such as MailChimp or MailerLite. And by simply asking your audience to sign up for updates or early access to products and services, you'd be surprised by how many folks will join your list. Just to say they want to stay in the know.

I could go on and on, but those are the key tips that I think would be helpful to any newbie in the cottage food world. Oh, and my final tip, if you do have a Facebook page, please make sure to add a backup admin to your page, please,

please, please. That was actually my saving grace when it came to a few of my other business pages, when I lost access to my personal Facebook page and it was disabled by Facebook, the business pages that only had me as an admin were deleted.

Forever. However the pages that had a backup admin stayed alive. So if you take nothing else away from what I've said, protect your pages by adding a friend, a spouse, a parent, or child, someone you trust to be an admin for that page. They may not ever actually perform any admin activities, but they will be able to help if anything were to happen to your personal account.

Um, so that's all I have. Thanks again for listening. And I hope you enjoy these tips.

[00:26:00] **David Crabill:** I think it's pretty clear that Cyd knows a thing or two about how to market yourself online. And, uh, she had some great advice in there, um, regarding the Facebook issues, I've definitely heard of some major horror stories like that from other entrepreneurs that have information-based businesses.

I actually haven't heard of any problems from a cottage food business, but there's no denying that if you're on Facebook, you're at the mercy of Facebook. And so, certainly we talked, uh, in a number of episodes on the podcast about email marketing. That is a platform that you can control, and it does tend to be more effective overall, especially for certain kinds of businesses.

So, um, this is stuff that maybe comes later down the road in your business journey, especially if you're just getting started out. but it's definitely something you want to be aware of And piggybacking on Cyd's recommendation for email marketing up next, we have Nicole Barry. she was on episode 17. And since then she's really built up her YouTube following and. she has one of the best communities out there for someone who is making macarons or French pastries. So with that, here is Nicole.

[00:27:15] **Nicole Barry:** Hi, my name's Nicole from Bake Toujours, and I run a Facebook group for macaron support and troubleshooting other pastries as well called Bake Toujours Macaron Pastry Discussion Group. If I had one tip to give for someone starting out, their CFO, I'd actually recommend what David stressed to me was to start an email list.

As you grow your customer base, social media can be unreliable these days with getting exposure out there. And having an email list is crucial to getting the

word out to your loyal customers that you have product to sell. You can share where you're going to be. If you're going to a certain market, you can collect pre-order information.

So you know that you're going to get some orders. When you go to a market it's a guaranteed way to connect to your clients and it builds a wonderful base for your business. And, I have grown so much with being able to have that line of communication. And I just want to thank David for that suggestion as I grew my business, and I hope it helps others as well.

[00:28:21] **David Crabill:** Yeah, it's cool to see how Nicole's business has blossomed ever since she was on the podcast just over a year ago and a little background on that. I usually, I mean, you don't hear this obviously, but usually after we end the interview for a podcast, I'll stay on with a guest and chat with them and ask them how their business is doing.

And in Nicole's case, she had this really strong following and budding following on YouTube. And I do remember asking her, you know, are you using email marketing? And she said, no. And so we went into this whole discussion about why that could be really helpful to our business and to her credit.

You know, she took the advice and ran with it and learned about email marketing. and she's been putting in the work and she is emailing every single week and does a great job with her emails and has a very loyal following now. So it's just been cool to see how her business has grown in just the past year. Now, Nicole was on the show way back in episode 17. And just before that episodes, 15 and 16, I had Jennifer Lopez on the show, along with Emily Blattel. They run a cake business, but Jennifer helped start Kentucky's cottage food law. And in turn that spawned the Kentucky Home Bakers, Facebook group and Jennifer and Lindsey Ballard run that group.

And because Jennifer was already on the show, I asked Lindsay, if she could represent their group on this episode, and here she is.

[00:29:57] **Lindsey Ballard:** Hi, this is Lindsey Ballard. I'm one of the admins of the Kentucky Home Bakers Facebook group. my biggest tip that I would suggest for anyone looking to start a home food business would be to find a single item that you really Excel at and focus on that. Um, I think too often we are tempted to expand and do everything all at once. I think it's better to find your sort of your niche market and grow your base from there. And then at the point that you've got a good customer base going, and you've built a reputation for yourself, then you can look at expanding and adding additional items. And I

think that'll help keep costs down for most people that initial expense, it helps you focus on what you're really good at, and it helps you kind of hone your craft and again, grow your base and allow your business to hopefully thrive.

[00:30:54] **David Crabill:** Yeah, that's definitely an important tip to keep in mind. And I would say over the course of all the episodes that I've done on the podcast, one thing that really stands out is that a lot of my guests chose to niche down and focus on what was working well and what was successful. And didn't try to over-complicate things.

So when you're starting out, sometimes you need to try some different things, but if you're finding something, that's working stick with it.

all right. Similar to how I had one of the owners of Kentucky's Facebook group on the show already. I also had one of the owners of Minnesota's Facebook group on the show. That's Shelley Erickson. That was episode 45. And although Shelley's done a ton to support Minnesota, uh, she's just one of many team members who have helped as she mentioned on her episode. And I feel like her right-hand woman is Jennifer Carriveau. I'm pretty sure she's been helping from the beginning as well. And you just wouldn't believe they've gone through together to try to deal with all the hoops that, that Minnesota's ag department has thrown their way. Uh, but anyway, I asked Jennifer, if she'd come on and represent their Facebook group on this episode, their Facebook group is the Minnesota registered cottage food producers group.

So let's listen in to hear what Jennifer has to share with us.

[00:32:17] **Jennifer Carriveau:** Hello, my name is Jennifer . I'm a registered cottage food producer in the state of Minnesota. I help maintain the Minnesota cottage food producers association, website, and I also help maintain the registered Minnesota cottage food producers, Facebook page. What I would recommend to any cottage food producer that is just starting out is to brand yourself.

It is so important that you have a good brand. It's going to take you really far. So you're going to have to do some soul searching. You're going to have to think about what your personal story is and what drives you to be a cottage food producer. For me, I started baking with my great grandmother.

I was three years old and I really thought about it and producing food goods for people, myself, my family. It's always been a part of my life. So what used to be my hobby now works for me, my family, and it is my profession. The next

thing, maintain a professional image. And that is so much more than your personal appearance. It's what you do, how you do it and the outcome of your actions. And it goes beyond the nuts and bolts of your business cards, marketing, and packaging and all that kind of stuff. And don't get me wrong.

those parts of your business are super important, but that's not the only thing that's going to make you successful. So when I'm talking about professional image, I'm talking about how you're engaging with your other fellow cottage food professionals. So for example, I help maintain a Facebook page and at times there are posts that serve no purpose other than to focus on.

Negativities, or it's not fair. And those types of posts don't really serve a purpose. They don't have a solution they're not positive and they take time away from things that you could otherwise focus on. So when you decide to engage in conversations on these Facebook pages, look at them as an opportunity for growth.

It's a professional platform and try to keep the conversations to that because when you can do that, you're going to have such good outcomes. They're going to be positive and people are going to grow from them. So I would just suggest that you just take the time and really choose wisely on which conversations you're involving yourself in.

My final suggestion is to get involved. With an organization in your state that has helped make cottage foods, what it is today. And this could be a formal organization like we have here in Minnesota, or it could be a group of people who are working on advancing cottage foods, or just keeping cottage foods relevant in your state.

And this is a vital part of your business lawmakers look to their constituents when they're making or changing laws. So, what that means is your voice matters and you have a positive impact on, your law and, um, what it does for your business. So it's really important. And another thing to keep in mind is that most of these advocates are volunteers and they have cottage food, businesses of their own.

So if you have any time at all, that you can help out, it's greatly appreciated. And the beauty of being an advocate is that you get to choose. What you do and how much time you put into that advocacy, whatever you do.

It's so appreciated and so very helpful. And if you make advocacy part of your business plan, it becomes part of your story and what a great story to share with

your customers. Not only do you have a business that you focus on in producing products, but you also have a story to share that, you know, you focus on food safety, you want to do it right.

Makes your brand and your product that much more strong. And so in closing my suggestion, my final suggestion is focus on what you can control and involve yourself and what is going to positively impact your business So. That's what I have to, um, suggest with my experience in cottage foods and, happy baking and have a wonderful holiday season and a prosperous 2022.

[00:36:02] **David Crabill:** Yeah. As Jen alluded to, there are more organizations out there to support cottage, food producers.

And I would say just more organization in general. I know there's four associations. There's a one that Jen just mentioned. The Minnesota cottage food producers association. There's one in Wisconsin, one in New Jersey and the most recent one from just a few months ago, there's one in Texas. And I see that trend continuing, uh, but even in states where there's not associations, there's still sometimes a lot of support.

And a great example of that is Colorado. I know that the CSU extension there has done a ton to help support their cottage food law over the years. And our next guest is Mary Snow. She works at the CSU extension And she helps run the Facebook group, Colorado cottage food peeps. That's the primary Facebook group in Colorado is actually mentioned on episode 12 by Joanne Littau who is, I know very active in that Facebook group. Uh, Mary's clip today is very specific to Colorado, but it really could be applied to most states. Let's hear what has to share with us.

[00:37:19] **Mary Snow:** This is Mary Snow. I'm with Colorado state university extension, and I run the Colorado cottage food peeps Facebook group for Colorado cottage food producers. There are a couple of different things that I would recommend. That people who are thinking about starting a cottage food business in Colorado, do the first is to review the Colorado cottage food act.

We have created a checklist, which is kind of a cheat sheet of do's and don'ts what's eligible. What's not eligible and what's required under the act. it's a great place to begin your, venture into cottage.

The second thing is to take a cottage food safety class, which is required in the state of Colorado and Colorado state university extension does offer this class. Our class is unique in that we not only talk about food safety in the kitchen,

rather than in a commercial entity. we also talk about the cottage food act as well.

So our class is a little bit unique than most food safety classes. The other thing that I would recommend is to contact your city and county, to find out about any local licensing and sales tax that you need to do. Um, sales tax in Colorado is not a state sales tax. It's a county or a city or, or a municipality tax.

And it's very confusing for most people. And so they need to learn about that before they get. also, I would recommend that you, if you're in Colorado, that you join our Facebook group And the last thing I would like to point out is that you need to treat it as a business. you know, if you're a business, you don't want to be co-mingling of monies with business money and personal money, and you want to make sure that you're, of the mind set, that it is actually a business and to move forward in that regard.

Um, we've seen a lot, a lot of people who struggle with that. And, have a hard time, shifting from the hobby mindset to business mindset.

[00:39:12] **David Crabill:** Once again, we're hearing similar things that were echoed earlier about making sure you're treating this as a business and taking it seriously. And that just kind of shows how common it is for new entrepreneurs to not take their business seriously enough. It's definitely a mindset thing. And she talked about not commingling money.

That's pretty easy to do nowadays. You can just set up a separate free bank account to do that, uh, regarding things that she talked about earlier that were Colorado-specific, like the food safety course, uh, Colorado is fortunate to have people dedicated to creating a food safety course that actually covers their cottage food law.

In addition to food safety, a few other states have cottage food, specific safety courses too, but most states, uh, you're just going to have to take the basic. food handlers class online. And I'd say, even if you're not in a state that requires it.

It's just so easy to do. It only usually costs about \$7 and takes a couple hours. And it's just basic information that you really should have when you're starting a food business. And then regarding sales taxes, those can get really complicated, no matter what state you're in my best advice there is to try to find someone who's in a similar position to you find someone who's at a farmer's market, who's gone before you and see what they have to do regarding some of those

legalities. Cause it can get hyper specific. As Mary said to cities and counties, and it can be pretty complicated.

so sometimes your best bet is just to find people who have gone before you

All right. So along the lines of the legalities, next up we have Martha Rabello, who is one of the admins on the New Jersey Hobby Bakers, Facebook group, and New Jersey just passed their first cottage food law this year as the biggest news of the year after many, many year battle with, uh, basically a single politician, but there've been many women that had helped support that effort. And Martha is one of four women who are admins of the New Jersey group and she's representing their group today. So let's hear from her.

[00:41:23] **Martha Rabello:** Hello, this is Martha Rabello and I'm one of the founders of the New Jersey Home Bakers Association. Since New Jersey has just recently started issuing cottage food permits. Our tip is to visit the department of health website and familiarize yourself. With what is allowed and what the permit process entails.

It would also be a great idea to check an accountant or your local SBA to guide you in establishing a business. And don't be discouraged about the items that are allowed. some people get stuck on frosting. There are plenty of non TCS frosting, recipes floating around the internet. Just Google it.

There are eBooks out there. You know, everything can be figured out. Happy baking.

[00:42:04] **David Crabill:** Martha mentioned the SBA in there. And that's something, a number of my podcast guests mentioned, and I know at least a few of them use the SBA pretty heavily as a business coaching and business support as they built their businesses. So definitely don't ignore the free opportunities and tools and resources you have around you.

The SBA is definitely a great organization to check out and along the lines of allowed foods. That's definitely a common question for new entrepreneurs is they just want to know what they can make. And fortunately, a lot of states are doing away with the specific lists of allowed foods.

I know that New Jersey just created one with their new law, so it's a bit more restrictive, but, uh, fortunately in a lot of states, you don't have to worry about that too much, But as Martha said, you know, there are quite a lot of things that are allowed even when there is a restricted list involved. And actually another

state that has a specific list is California. That's the state I live in. And as something that Bonnie talks about in her clip, Bonnie Forman runs the Facebook group called Creating Your Legal California Cottage Food Business. And that is definitely the largest state specific Facebook group that there is for the cottage food industry.

Uh, I've been a part of it, I think from almost the beginning, since that's where I live. And now it's got almost 5,000 members, so it's definitely a really helpful group for California, CFOs and Bonnie has been running this group for eight years, I think. And she's been active. I feel like almost every day, just present and supporting California CFOs coming in. So kudos to her for running this for such a long time. and let's hear what advice she has to share.

[00:43:53] **Bonnie Forman:** Hi, this is Bonnie Forman and I manage a Facebook group called Creating Your Legal, California Cottage Food Business. And I've been a cottage food operator since 2013, which is pretty much when the law was put into effect in California. And a couple of tips I would give you the first one is if you're interested in.

cottage food operator in California, be sure to check the ingredient list, and the product list on the state page, because we're not able to use all the ingredients we might like to use. Like we're not allowed to sell cheesecake. It has to be shelf stable. And so if you look at that list, it'll give you a better idea of what's allowed and what's not allowed.

California is becoming more and more liberal with their ingredients. So, we're grateful for that. The other thing I might recommend is that you get insurance because you want to protect yourself. Assuming you're not just selling to friends and family. You want to make sure you have some protection.

So many of us use an insurance company called flip, which is, basically designed for people in the culinary businesses. So that's one thing, but people also use their home insurance companies and other insurance companies. You might consider looking into that. And that's pretty much all I have right now.

Feel free to visit us at that group if you want to. And we'll see you then.

[00:45:13] **David Crabill:** regarding insurance, a lot of people ask if insurance is required and in almost all cases, a government entity, isn't going to require insurance. Liability insurance. But, oftentimes a venue will. So if you want to sell at a farmer's market, they're probably going to require that you get insurance.

And as Bonnie was saying, you might want to get it anyway. It is not expensive. A flip is the one that I recommend as well. And they're definitely one of the least expensive options out there. If you're looking for insurance coverage for the year,

And regarding the allowed foods for California, I can confirm that a lot of the questions in the California group are related to, can I make this, can I make that? And I give credit to Bonnie for often answering the same questions over and over again, as do most of these Facebook group owners. But while we're focused on California, the next guest is Peter Ruddock. He's also from California, but for a change of pace, he was one of the primary people who help support AB 6, 2, 6 a few years ago. That is California's MEHKO law. That would be microenterprise home kitchen, operation law. So this really steps away from the traditional cottage food realm and that the micro enterprise home kitchen operations allow people to sell homemade meals from their home.

And this is a major growing movement in, I'd say, in the nation at this point, because Utah just passed one of these laws this year. and I would say the pandemic definitely gave a major boost to this movement that started a few years ago in California, but Peter runs a Facebook group called How To Sell Home Cooked Food. And that caters to the people in California, primarily who are using the MEHKO law, but that is growing very fast as is the whole movement.

So let's hear what Peter has to say.

[00:47:07] **Peter Ruddock:** Hi, this is Peter Ruddock. I'm the policy director for the COOK Alliance, where the organization that sponsored the homemade food operations act AB 626, the California law that lets people who reside in counties that have adopted the law to sell meals. We're also big supporters of cottage, food operations.

We have a Facebook group called how to sell home cooked food. Well, we have a lot of tips, heavily policy oriented at the moment, but also peer to peer advice, we get asked a lot about using platforms, which are much more common in the meal world than they are in the cottage food world, but they exist in both.

The first thing we tell people is you don't have to use a platform. People aren't sure about that. But the second thing is that they can give you some benefits, but you want to be very careful about which platform you choose. There are a lot of them out there at the moment and they are not all equal.

Some of them charge considerably larger fees than other, some of them give more services than other, most importantly, some of them are rigorously following. And others aren't. And they'll tell you that you can work in places that have not opted in, in counties that have not opted in.

And that is actually setting you up for a little bit of danger since it's not really permitted in the county, that the county will come in and shut you down. Most importantly, I think is if the platform tells you something. It isn't true like that right upfront, you might suspect that other problems will occur in the future.

So shop around, choose the platform that works best for you. And that has the fairest practices that is following the law. Reach out to COOK Alliance, join our group, how to sell home, cooked food and keep spreading the movement.

[00:49:04] **David Crabill:** Peter's advice is certainly relevant to his industry. I know that those platforms are a big deal in the micro restaurant space right now, as everything is growing really fast. and cottage food businesses have to deal with this a little bit as well. I mean, there's always entrepreneurs trying to develop marketplaces for the cottage food space. You might not know that Forrager initially was a marketplace for cottage food, that was initial concept of it.

That's why it was called "Forrager": a place for you to find food. Um, that's not something I'm focused on anymore, anytime in the near future. But, uh, there are always entrepreneurs trying to develop marketplaces for it. And so a lot of of times, cottage food businesses do get marketed to by these entrepreneurs. And, you know, the same kind of discernment would be required as Peter's mentioning. I'll just say without going too much detail, there are a lot of complexities involved that make it a lot easier for a marketplace type concept to succeed with a micro restaurant industry than with the cottage food industry. So why we haven't seen one of those takeoff yet, but I do think as the cottage food movement grows over time, not sure how long it'll take, you know, few years, maybe 10 years. I'm not sure. I do think that eventually platforms will become a major part of the cottage food space. but for now Peter's advice is mostly applicable to the micro restaurant space. But when he says they're big supporters of the cottage food space as well, he really means that he actually personally helped me a lot with the bill that I started in California last year to help improve the cottage food law.

So I appreciate his help with that. And that kind of ties into our last two clips here that focus on collaboration. Next up we have Jennie Gibson. She actually runs two Facebook groups. She runs the Florida Cottage Food Bakers group.

That's the primary Facebook group for Florida. And then she also runs a Facebook group called Cake Pop Pricing Q&A. Let's hear what Jennie has to share with us.

[00:51:14] **Jennie Gibson:** Hi, my name is Jenny Gibson. I'm the owner of a Florida cottage food business called the cake pop shop. I've been operating here in Jacksonville, Florida for about nine or 10 years now in 2015, me and a few of my friends, other cottage bakers here in Florida. We created a group called Florida cottage food bakers. I have a tip for new bakers and that would be to recognize the other bakers around you as resources, these people, aren't your competition, they're your resources. They have information that you need and together you can be better bakers. And that's what we do in the group. And that's what we encourage. We help each other find things like I'm booked. And can anybody take this cake order or where can I buy this dye?

Or where can I. Get this product. What class can I take for this? Why does my cake keep coming out? Looking like this. So start seeing each other as resources and stop seeing each other as competition because we can work better together. Good luck and happy baking.

[00:52:18] **David Crabill:** One trend that I think you'll find. If you listen to all the previous episodes is that many of my podcast guests mentioned how collaborative our industry is. and it sounds like Jenny does see people in her group that have a competitive mindset, but I'll just say this, the people who are successful in making it onto my show clearly have a collaborative mindset.

And I would say that's a big contributing factor to their success. So her advice is certainly very important. Closely echoed by our last guest of the episode. and like, Nicole, she's also already been on the podcast. Lisa was on episode six.

Lisa is a huge advocate for the cottage food movement not only in her state, but nationally as well. She and her husband, John wrote the book *Homemade For Sale*. And I know that they're working on a pretty significant second edition of that book that I believe should be coming out in 2022. And they also hosted the first ever national cottage food conference this past April. That was a huge success, there were, I think over 900 people who registered to attend and you could feel a palpable sense of community and activity in that conference.

and beyond that Lisa helped lead the charge on two successful lawsuits in Wisconsin that allowed people in her state to sell home baked goods. So she's certainly done a lot and she helps run the Facebook group called Wisconsin

Home Bakery, Business Owners. and I'll let her wrap up this episode with one last tip.

[00:54:01] **Lisa Kivirist:** Hello, my name is Lisa Kivirist and I am an administrator and one of the founders of the Wisconsin cottage food association website. And we also have a Wisconsin Facebook for home bakery, business owners. And. Out of our group of enthusiastic folks involved with our state here. One tip I'd like to offer is that importance of connecting to that community in your state and nationally as well, but particularly other cottage food entrepreneurs in your state, because you all share like we do here in Wisconsin, a similar set of issues, parameters, opportunities, challenges, and being close to each other really helps.

In developing those relationships, be it relationships for support. If you're starting out your business to referrals, once you're up and running and you have too much business coming in and you can refer that to somebody else in your area, to everything from when the local supermarket. Butter to issues you may be having with regulations or dealing with state agencies, et cetera.

So knowing your community is super important. It's great to see the growth of state, Facebook groups, state associations, like we have, because that's really. Step in bringing our cottage food community together on a more regional and local business and doing what we can collaboratively to again, grow that cottage, food, movement nationally as well.

So know your neighbor baker, canner candy maker. It really defies what traditional business would call competition because we realize as the cottage food community, that the more we know each other, the more friendships develop, the more relationships develop and trust. The stronger we all are. And Facebook groups can really be a first step in doing that. Good luck.

[00:55:52] **David Crabill:** Well said, Lisa, and yes, once again, this is a collaborative industry and we are stronger because of it. And as she said, It is important to find that community and find Facebook groups. And my hope is that this episode will help you find some Facebook groups that you can be a part of, if you're not already a part of them already, and you can build those relationships and grow your business even further.

you know, as I was planning out this episode and finding Facebook groups to be a part of it, I had in my head, some things that I wanted covered on the episode as some of the most important tips for cottage food entrepreneurs. And I think the Facebook group owner is on this episode, pretty much covered all of them. I

was really impressed by the wide gamut of different tips that they had, and they're all super helpful and relevant. and hopefully he'll be able to take this information and run with it

Again, I'm putting all the links to the Facebook groups down below in the show notes, which you can find by going to furrager.com/podcast/50.

And that does it for episode 50. On the next episode, episode 51, that's going to be another unique episode. That's just going to be with me only, and I'll be sharing some information that I haven't shared before and I'll leave it at that.

If you enjoyed this episode, please head over to apple podcasts and leave me a review. A review is the best way to support this show and it will help others find it as well.

And finally, if you're thinking about selling your own homemade food, check out my free mini course, where I walk you through the steps you need to take to get a cottage food business off the ground to get the course, go to cottagefoodcourse.com.

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