

# How To Build A Food Business (And Life) That You Love with Sari Kimbell – Part 2

**David Crabill:** Welcome to the Forrager podcast, where we talk about strategies for running a food business from home. I'm David Crabill, and this is part two of my interview with Sari Kimbell. If you haven't heard part one yet, I encourage you to go back and check that out first.

But in this episode, Sari digs into some of the nuts and bolts of how to build a successful food business. How do you calculate cost of goods sold or cogs how to be profitable? How do you scale? How do you brand yourself? She shares a ton of great advice that she's learned over the years of working with small food businesses.

And speaking of great advice this Friday, April 22nd, Sari is giving a workshop about increasing sales at farmer's markets. I personally vetted the content for this workshop and trust me when I say that if you sell at markets or events, you won't want to miss this. Sari literally owns a farmer's market.

And she has tons of great tips to share. if you can't join this Friday, you can still access the replay. Instead,

check out the show notes for a link to sign up for that. And with that, let's jump right into this episode.

there's obviously all these things you have to go through in starting a business. Right. there's a sales piece. There's the marketing piece, there's the licensing. And someone could hire a coach like you to walk them through that. But also part of it is the product itself.

Right. And you mentioned earlier, like some products are, more easy to start quickly. Some products take a longer time. So what kind of products tend to work? Well, what kind of products do you look at and say, well, you know, I'm not so.

[00:01:24] **Sari Kimbell:** Yeah. So there's a hierarchy definitely of cost investment. you know, anytime we're like baked goods, generally low barrier to entry things in the cottage food realm, right. Tend to be, low investment, easy to

produce. they are shelf stable and then probably the next step up would be like a shelf stable product, like a hot sauce or a salsa, or can't, you know, pickles, something like that. When you get out of the cottage food realm, there's process authority. There's some more food safety pieces there that need to happen. So that's kind of probably the next level up of difficulty. Then we get into refrigerated. So potentially hazardous food, not shelf stable. so things like fresh salsa, dips, things like that, are typically kind of usual things. the expense there is because it is a fresh product. And so the licensing can be different. But you don't have that longevity right where you, like, you have to make it frequently. And so trying to figure out how to make money doing that, you need a lot more customers.

You can't just make a whole bunch of sauce that shelf stable and then work through it. Eventually, like if you're making salsa, you gotta like, make it exactly amount for the customers you have, and then keep trying to grow that. And then anytime you add in, start adding in dairy, I find that to be another level of challenge, especially in California, where you're at, there's a whole thing with dairy.

There's a lot of rules and regulations and then meat, well, I guess I'd throw in frozen, right above refrigerated, frozen has even more challenges. And then meat is the most challenging. people ask me all the time, like, do you tell people their products or their ideas terrible?

Like, what I say is anything's possible, if this is your love and your passion and your why is strong enough, I can help you do it. We can get it there, but some products take a lot more money than others. And so if you want to do a meat product, it has to be made under USDA inspection.

So even if that's like, but I just have pepperoni in my, like, I was working with somebody who wanted to do pizza rolls. Right. And it's like, I get it. It's, it's cured meat. It's pretty safe. But because it's above this threshold, it's gotta be done in a USDA facility. And there just aren't that many, you know, there's not commissary kitchens that are USDA approved and there's, there's not a lot of co-packers out there.

So, that's how I'd kind of do the hierarchy of easy to hard and low cost to high cost.

[00:04:17] **David Crabbill:** So when someone's coming up with a product, do you think it needs to be like a unique product or do you think they should start with something that's tried and true?

[00:04:29] **Sari Kimbell:** what I like to think about is let's take something That people are already familiar with and they're already buying, and then let's just turn it one degrees.

Like let's just add a little spin to it. That makes it unique just slightly so that it's still rooted in people's awareness. Like they get what the product is. but we're not asking people to make this huge leap. So anytime there's like sauces that are really unfamiliar, I think about actually there was a, an Ethiopian producer when I was at whole foods market who made this amazing sauce. But you know, it, it had a different name. I can't even think of what the name was now, but it had a, you know, a kind of foreign name that most Americans would not know what it is. And so. Most people are not super adventurous. When your products on a shelf. Now, when you're at a farmer's market, you get to sell you.

Right. I always tell people like, just start with Avery labels and start simple. Like you're there to speak for your product and you can tell people why the sauce is so amazing and they can try it. Right. But once it's on a store shelf, if you're asking people to make too far of a leap, And get outside of their comfort zone.

Like when they just don't even know what it is, going to be too much. And that product is going to sit on the shelf. We say in the business, like it's going to require education. Well, if you hear that education is money, right? Education means dollars out of your pocket because the way we educate people on a store shelf is through promotions.

It's through coupons, right? It's through sampling, it's through giving product to employees so that they can learn about it. It's through social media, marketing and ads and things like that. So anytime your product comes with education, that's where it's really challenging, uh, when you have a shelf stable product or any product.

And I always say that your packaging becomes so much more important when it's on a store shelf than when you're at a farmer's market, because it has to do all the heavy lifting that you would normally do at the farmer's market. at my farmer's market, my winter market, we have an amazing, um, middle Eastern, dip.

He makes these middle Eastern dips. So, I mean, there's your traditional hummus, but then there's all these, there's like a beet Walnut puree and there's yogurt dips, and there's all these amazing, middle Eastern dips, but. They would

not sell. I mean, we actually, he and I talked about how do we bring these to market?

And I said, you got it. You're going to have to invest pretty heavily into packaging and branding. That really educates people that tells people what this is. And uplevels the outside of the product. We all know how good it is on the inside, but right now they're buying it because you're there you're telling them all about it and they love it.

Right. And they get to try it at the market. So that's where I would go with that question.

[00:07:42] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I totally agree that, the packaging really matters the branding really matters, especially once you get on store shelves.

So when somebody does have kind of a really unique product and maybe its going to take education, maybe it's going to take money to get customers to notice that product. Do you think it would be better for them to just start with something else that kind of like leads them into business and gets them to test the waters of running a food business, producing things, selling things before they go for what they really want to sell down the.

[00:08:16] **Sari Kimbell:** I think if you're willing to start at a farmer's market, I do think that is a great place where you can sell the product and you can really get that immediate feedback from people. I mean, you're basically building an FAQ page, right. As people are coming up and they're asking you all these questions, you're going to get really good at delivering the answer and getting faster and more concise and you can play with it and you know, how do you describe it?

And sometimes you need to like, use two things to describe it. Well, it's, it's like a scone, but it, but with this, right. And so you got to root it in something that people already understand. So I'm not saying that you can't be successful, especially at a farmer's market, with a very unique product. I actually am working with somebody in food, business success who makes like liege waffles, like those, European delicious waffles. But instead of the sugar, she's putting like a donut glaze on it instead. So that's unique. So she can say it's, you know, it's like a waffle, but with a doughnut glaze, a doughnut frosting on it instead.

So it's still rooted in something that people understand and know. If it's something really, really different. Probably the only person that I've ever, I

didn't say no, but I was very firm that this would require a significant investment.

they're called Peruvian nuts and she was from Peru you know, she was telling me all about them and they were like, they get roasted in Peru. They get roasted, you know, by street vendors and they season them and they're really delicious. And I was imagining kind of like, like corn nuts almost.

And then she sent me some samples and I thought I was going to break a tooth. I was like, these are rock hard. I literally had a hammer and hammer, like a tiny mini little coconut. And they were already peeled. Like the hard shell had already been peeled off of it. And I just said, you know, I'm sure that these are popular where you're at, but I think it's going to be too big of a leap for the American, the typical American consumer.

you know, there's going to be a lot of investment here to make these palatable, or we need to turn them into a flour or do something else with them, but just to sell them as is, I think it's, that's probably not a great idea. I still think you need to do what you're passionate about, but maybe if you're choosing between two things, I often have people that are like, I want to do this and this, and they are two really different things.

I'll usually have them start with the easier thing. That's a little more palatable and kind of figure out the business side of things first. And then, add in the other thing, if they're still really wanting to do it.

[00:11:09] **David Crabill:** A lot of people who come to me, you know, say, I really, really want to sell cheesecake or I really, really want to sell XYZ. That's not allowed under the cottage food law. And they maybe want to start from home for various reasons. do you feel like they should pare down what they're trying to sell or simplify it to align with the cottage food law and that maybe they don't have as much passion about a product, but they get to start under the cottage food realm or do you think it'd be better just to make the leap into the commercial side of things, right from the get-go.

[00:11:44] **Sari Kimbell:** think that question really comes down to what are you trying to get out of this business? you know, I really believe in like designing a business around your life and like what is going to feel really good to you? And what's going to Yeah. Just align with, your vision of your life.

And so if a cottage food business, because you want to be able to make it at home, like stay with your kids at home or whatever it is that that is going to be

way more conducive to your lifestyle, then yeah. I would pair it down. if you really are ready to go all in and you're like, yes, cheesecake, this is it.

This is what I'm doing. And I'm willing to back it up with an investment of money and an investment of time. then we can go all in on that. But I, I really want people to start with, designing, uh, a life like five years from now, or a year from now, or, or longer, what does that business look like?

That really gives you joy? And that you're actually enjoying, because most of us are not starting businesses to suffer and to live a really hard life. Like we think that a business is going to give us fun and freedom and flexibility and joy. and it can, but we need to. Be making choices that align with whatever that looks like for us.

So I have some people that come in and they're like, my goal is to have a million dollar exit. And then I have people I work with that are like, my goal is to make vacation money on the weekends that I use, to take my family to Disneyland, and everything in between. Right. just have to look at like, what is the lifestyle that you want to be living? You know, I work with a lot of moms who decide to go all in and go for the products that maybe they can't do cottage food, or they want to do retail and wholesale. And then, you know, they're in the kitchen, for eight hours, 10 hours a day doing production, and then they are delivering their product and they're doing social media and all of the things.

And, you know, you just have to decide for yourself is that the life that aligns with your vision of what you want

[00:14:02] **David Crabill:** Yeah. I mean, obviously people fall on all aspects of the spectrum, you know, from wanting it to be a side hobby, to wanting to take it to be a national or multinational corporation. But I'd say obviously most people fall in the middle. Right. And I'd say probably one of the most common things I hear from especially bakers.

They eventually want to have a storefront. they eventually want this to be something that they could set up a brick and mortar and have people walking in and, you know, create that kind of vibe. So for that type of entrepreneur who has that kind of goal, maybe they're not their goal.

Isn't to stay at home forever. They eventually want to take it out of the cottage food realm and into stores. what would you guide people on to, you know, set them up for eventually reaching that goal in the future?

[00:14:50] **Sari Kimbell:** Yeah, I think about, one of my clients, Leah, she has Le Petite croissant in Colorado Springs and she started out under cottage food. She does these amazing French pastries, macarons and croissants, and started the farmer's market. She built up kind of a online ordering platform. I always recommend starting small, especially if you've never been an entrepreneur.

I do find the most. People who are kind of set up for success and the ones that let things roll off themselves a little bit easier are the ones who have tried entrepreneurship before tried and usually failed, but tried at the very least. So if you can start small and go with cottage food, I'm all for that, because there's just so much to learn about being an entrepreneur.

And I just prefer you to take it in, in kind of bite size pieces, if you can. No pun intended, uh, all my food puns. But yeah, take that in manageable pieces. Get good at one thing, don't bring in too many products all at once. Like, like have your kind of signature things, get feedback, make changes, really understand your cost of goods sold, like get your sales dialed in your spiel, your marketing at the farmer's market.

So get really good at that layer in new products, you can test those out and then yeah, when you're ready. When it's like, okay, I'm I feel like I got my sea legs underneath me, and then you're feeling inspired and motivated to take it to the next level. Like at every level you have to kind of do that reality check of like, is this how I want to be spending my time?

And, let's check my expectations at the door. you know, I worked a lot in restaurants. They always say with restaurants, like expect it to cost twice as much. You know, twice as much time. So, that would be the same for opening a brick and any brick and mortar, right? So check your expectations at the door.

If you think it's gonna take six months, it's going to take a year. If you think it's going to take 50,000, it's gonna take a hundred thousand, right? So, there's sort of a mentality that you have to adopt. There is a mindset around entrepreneurship. you're gonna be making investments and you're going to be putting money on the line.

You're going to be putting some of your personal property, you know, your personal assets on the line support, especially a brick and mortar, or just going into a commercial kitchen and supporting the production of that and all of the packaging and the sales and everything that need to happen.

So I think it's good to start out, get your feet wet, you know, see what it's all about. And then re-decide do I really want to go to the next level with this and am I willing to make those time and money investments?

[00:17:34] **David Crabill:** Yeah, the profitability piece is an important one. Right? And I think it's a one that a lot of new entrepreneurs kind of miss. you know, what do you have to guide new entrepreneurs on when they're building a business and you have to focus on it being a business and not just, giving products away and, you know, having it be an expensive.

[00:17:51] **Sari Kimbell:** Yes. Oh my gosh. So I have a pricing for profit workshop, and I'd be happy to give your listeners a discount code. Um, if you're up for that. But, I have a pricing for profit workshop. It's a spreadsheet. So cost of goods sold is made up of four things.

It's your ingredients, it's the packaging. It's the labor to, create the product to produce it. And then it's the labor to package it. And so all four, four of those things go into your cost of goods sold. technically your kitchen's not in that your delivery costs your anything else. This is just, what does it cost for me to have this product in a package ready to sell so you have your cost of goods sold, let's say you're making a croissant and it costs you two. So your cost of goods sold with your labor because that's where people mess up, especially anybody just starting out, making something at home. I would say 80% of the time, you know, out of 10, people do not factor in any labor because they're just like I'm doing it.

I love it. Right. I'm having fun doing it. Or I'll pay myself later. But the reality is we got to put in our labor costs because at some point you may want to bring in somebody to help you with this, right? You may want to bring in production help, or you may want to outsource it and send it to a co-packer.

Even in cottage food, I know people who pay, you know, who do pay people to come and help them with production. So it's really, really important that we build that in at the beginning and we put in a reasonable wage. So if you were going to hire somebody off the street, what would you have to pay them?

And depending on where you live, I have people that put in \$18 an hour or \$20 an hour, or, some places are a lot less expensive.

but be realistic about that. Make sure you have labor in there. then we have our cost of goods sold. That's what it takes for us to make the product. and then we can play around with our pricing.

So we want to price it so that. We're making a certain amount of margin. So our percentage is, if we price it at \$4, we're making 50% margin. And then My tool also will figure out your, wholesale and your, distribution prices as well. if you are thinking that someday you do want to go into retail and turn this in.

You know, I know some states that do allow you to do wholesale as well. It's really important that we have something called price parity. Sometimes what happens when people come to me when they've been doing cottage food, or they've just been at a farmer's market, they haven't factored in their labor and then they don't factor in, this wholesale piece.

And so they're like, okay, I'm making 50% margin on my croissants at the farmer's market. Now I'm going to just charge the retailer the same price. I would charge my consumer. Well, that's not how it works. The retailer wants to be able to charge what you charge. So we call it price parity, because we need to be assuming that the retailer is going to charge their customers \$4.

And so guess who takes the loss right? You do as the maker, because you got to give the retailer, the grocery store, some margin there, some profit. So, you know, I have people that are like, well, but I need to charge the, coffee shop, \$4. If I'm going to make any money on these. And I say, well, then we're going to have to raise your price at the market.

Or we're going to have to look at how we create more efficiencies, because you're only going to be able to sell it for maybe 2.75 to that coffee shop. So, you know, if you're only making 75 cents, is that worth it to you? Wholesale is all about a quantity game, right? It's, quantity over a quality relationship, like a farmer's market.

So it's about selling cases of product, right. And making profit. But anyway, at the end of the day, then we also need to, so let's say we're selling \$4 croissants at the farmer's market then you can plug in to this tool, like, okay, If I sold 200 of these in a month, what is my, gross profit.

then you can take out everything else, right? your gas for taking you to the market, your market fees, you know, tent and table and the credit card fees and all of those things that get taken out. And then you can say, okay, if I sell 200 of these, and then I take out all the rest of my expenses, am I profitable?

Or you can work backwards and you can say, well, I need to sell 500 croissants for me to be profitable. What's it going to take for me to be able to do that?

[00:22:45] **David Crabill:** You mentioned the pricing for profitability workshop and, if you give some kind of discount code, then I'll put that down in the show notes, but, you talked about efficiency and, you know, most people you're right. Do not factor in labor when they're calculating their prices, but I've also seen the opposite where like, especially like a jam or a jelly vendor, they will like calculate in their cost of goods, sold how much the fruit costs from the grocery store, what the labor is at minimum wage. And they're like, I have to sell these jars for \$30 a piece.

[00:23:20] **Sari Kimbell:** Yes. I've seen that.

[00:23:21] **David Crabill:** So what do you say in that situation?

[00:23:24] **Sari Kimbell:** So when people come to me and they're like, uh, they finally do those numbers and they're like, this doesn't pencil out. What I always say is, I understand at the beginning that this is an investment and most businesses don't make money their very first year, even out of the gate. But what I always say is, do we have a path to profitability?

So is there a way that, that we can, we call it value, add, but like, can we get more efficient if we scale up and we are using bigger equipment and we're getting help, or we're using tools that will help us be more efficient in our labor. Instead of buying fruit from the grocery store, can we buy fruit wholesale from a farm or fruit wholesale from a distributor? can we get our packaging, instead of buying through U line or something like that, or can we now buy 5,000 bags and really get that discount? Same with labels and other packaging, right? So what I always do is say, okay, here's our worst case scenario.

And then we make a copy of that spreadsheet and we make a new tab and then we start playing around with, okay, what if we scale this up to, you know, we. can take this cookie dough and we can multiply it by 10 and we can make this batch that's 10 times as big. And what if we can find these ingredients?

So I have them go out and research and call and okay, how can I get the least expensive chocolate chips that still meet my quality standards, right. I'm not asking you to totally sacrifice the quality of your product, but go and find the ingredients, go and price them out and same with packaging.

Right. And then let's think about your labor, because the reality is to take, well, let's just take the jam example, but to make a recipe that makes, eight units of jam, If I multiply that by 10, it doesn't take 10 times as long to make that same jam recipe. you know, it might take twice as long or three times as long, but it

won't take 10. So that's how we really start getting efficiencies when we scale up.

[00:25:35] **David Crabill:** now there's so much stuff that goes on when you're starting a business. And I read somewhere that you said, that there are a lot of opportunities to waste money and time as you're starting a business. What are some of the things that you see people focusing on when they start that they really shouldn't be.

[00:25:55] **Sari Kimbell:** I mean, I'm, I'm all for great branding. I love beautiful branding and investing and, great graphic design. But I think especially for cottage food, I don't recommend that you go all in and really invest a ton of money into graphic design. you know, if you have a friend or a family member, somebody who's great at design and can do that stuff for you.

Awesome. I just don't know that that's like the best place when you first start out, like go prove the concept. I always say like, do not ever get 5,000 of anything when you're just starting out, like, yeah. You're going to pay more per label. Just start out with a hundred labels, because most likely once you launch, you're going to make changes there.

We always make changes. Most people, especially as they're into commercial, kitchens and getting the commercial licensing, their labels, I have yet to find a label that I cannot find a major error on with the FDA. So you want to get your labels checked? I have known people, not my clients, but I have known people who have just gone all in on labels or packaging.

They did not get their labels reviewed. They didn't have somebody look over them for FDA compliance, or they mess up their barcode. That's one, I've seen a lot too where they, they size it weird or they make it too small. and then all of that stuff goes in the trash. Right. And that is terrible.

Like, it feels terrible. And it's just like, you're literally throwing money into the garbage and lighting it on fire. And oftentimes there's licenses. People think that they need, but they don't need yet. it can go the other way as well. But, yeah, generally I would say kind of branding never get 5,000 of anything or a thousand start with like a hundred or 200, make it as flexible and changeable as possible when you're just starting out, because I promise you, you will make errors and you'll want to, or not even errors, just like, oh, I think I need to add this ingredient or I'm going to change this flavor a little bit because people are telling me they don't love it or whatever.

Right. You're just, you're gonna make some changes along the way. And it should be that way. I want you to make changes. I just don't want you to be so invested in it that you can't shift easily. So just be able to pivot really easily. so you can experiment, have a little fun. Um, Anything else people shouldn't spend money on upfront, or too early? Well, I mean, certainly the kitchen you gotta find. Kitchen. That's going to be suitable for your needs. That is, compliant. And you know, is a commercial kitchen, but man, there are some really expensive kitchens out there and that just kills your margin right when you start to scale up.

And so I always encourage people to get a little creative. I mean, I have a guy making salsa out of a sports bar, that he used to go to. And, you know, he just goes in before lunch and makes up his fresh salsa and, they actually worked out a little trade, so he makes their salsa for them and they let them use his kitchen.

Right. I have somebody who found another producer who has a kitchen, their own space, and then they're renting, you know, paying a much smaller rental fee than like a typical commissary kitchen, um, schools, uh, churches, daycares, you know, nightclubs, um, coffee shops, like a coffee shop going in in the evening when they're closed or I've had people work out of nightclubs.

Cause nobody's there in the morning. Right. So I mean there's some basic things that need to be compliant, but you can get creative with your commercial space and yeah, some of them can be really, really expensive.

[00:29:53] **David Crabill:** Yeah. I mean, definitely a lot of people, especially people in rural areas, they're like, there's no shared kitchen or commissary kitchen around me, but there are a lot of commercial kitchens around you. If you know where to look like. Even a lot of farms have commercial kitchens on them, when you're talking about, getting a commercial kitchen, like, what are we looking at in terms of cost?

[00:30:12] **Sari Kimbell:** Yeah, like I said, it really can vary. Sometimes kitchens will charge you usually they're structured like an hourly fee with a minimum. So, Maybe it's like \$25 an hour with a minimum of eight hours. And then for every hour after that, then there's an hourly fee.

So yeah. you gotta be really efficient in there. know that you're going to have some trial and error and figuring out the equipment and stuff like that. So on day one, don't expect to be like the most efficient ever. But you know, after a couple of weeks, you'll be really good.

You want to always be, how can I be the most efficient in here so that I'm not burning time, wasting time? Sometimes I've seen flat fees, you know, where it's \$1,800 a month and you get to use the kitchen as much as you want now, depending on your product, you know, that might be a really good thing for you.

If you're a baker you know, bakers tend to be in the kitchens a lot versus somebody who makes a batch of sauce once a month and then it keeps forever, right? So you kind of have to look at your own needs. You might want, like a flat fee might work out better, but if you only need the kitchen four hours a month and it's a flat fee, that's, that's a lot of money to be paying.

So that's typically most of the time, the way those things are structured, hourly with a minimum or a flat fee.

[00:31:38] **David Crabill:** Yeah. So when someone decides like, okay, I'm going to get into a commercial kitchen. And I'm going to try to put my product on store shelves. Like you said, it was all about the branding piece and letting the product speak for itself. Like, what are some of the things that you recommend to people in terms of making sure that their labels stand out on a store?

[00:31:56] **Sari Kimbell:** Well, the very first thing is that your product can not be for everyone. So I'm sure you hear it all the time. I hear it all the time where I say, who's this product for like, who is this intended for? Who's your customer? and they say, well, everybody loves it. It's for everyone. Kids love it. Moms love it.

Grandpa's love it. College kids love it. Everybody loves it. And I say, I get that. Like, it can be for everybody, but we need to choose a customer. And so I always start with a customer avatar. I have some really great branding questionnaire, worksheets in food, business success, but we really want to start with who is this for?

And who is it not for. I want you to exclude some people. if they end up buying your product, then great. They're just another customer base, but they're not your main person. I always ask people to kind of think about products that they love, that they feel really attached to that feel like they're just speaking to them.

And that's because those brands, those products have been willing to exclude people and willing to like, say, here's my people, here's my person. So I'm going to speak to a mom with two kids, you know, under the age of six, right. Versus

I'm going to speak to grandpa's or I'm to speak to, you know, people in different phases of their life.

So. People hate this exercise because they really want the product to be for everybody. But when you speak to everybody, you speak to no one and oftentimes your product, at a local level, when you're a small scale, you just cannot get around it, that your product is going to be more expensive on the shelf, right.

It just is because your efficiencies are not as great as like let's, I have a cracker company I'm thinking about, right? Like they cannot compete with like a major cracker maker. They're, hand-making these crackers and sprinkling flowers on them and hand sprinkling sea salt. And they're amazing, but you know, they retail for, I think they're 8.99 at whole foods.

So that packaging, needs to communicate a premium price tag if especially if it's really going to be, you know, much higher price point than its competitors. So typically, although not always. You know, a lot of times these smaller scale boutique, local producers tend to have a higher end customer because you're not going to be able to go onto the store shelves of like, Walmart or Sam's or something, you know, something more that's for, we call them conventional grocery stores.

So that would be like your Safeway and your King Soopers, or Ralph's things like that. And then you have, your more like organic stores, like, the natural channel, like whole foods and vitamin cottage and some of those ones there. So generally you're going to probably want to be going into the natural space, which is already going to have a little bit more of a premium shopper.

They're going to devote more money to their food bill. They're willing to pay higher prices. So you want to be sure that your packaging is communicating, premium to some extent, and then that it's also speaking to your customer. Right? And we also know that 70% of women of household shopping is done by women.

So even if your product is more geared towards men like a barbecue sauce or a hot sauce or something like that, you know, we want to be mindful that. Women are generally the ones buying it for the household. I had somebody come see me at the small business development center and he had this salsa and he was, a white guy with red hair.

And you know, I had this amazing salsa. And I was like, oh, why do you do this? And where's this come from? And he's like, yeah, it's not like it's a family recipe or anything like that. He's like, I just love making it. So we talked about kind of being a little cheeky with it and he was Scottish.

And so he called it Scotsman salsa, and I thought, that's great. like, we're not doing a family recipe here, right. From Mexico. Like, let's be a little playful with it. But then he came back with this really angry Scottish person, like really angry, scary drawing of a Scottish person on his label, like in a kilt like Braveheart.

Right. And I was like, yeah, this, this is gonna really turn the women shoppers off. So there's a balance there. Right? I guess we were definitely excluding some people there. and maybe some people would have really gotten a kick out of it. But I was like, we got to find a balance here where we're maybe not totally, totally excluding our female shoppers.

So long story is just, you gotta know who your customer is and you have to be willing to speak their language, speak about what's important to them. Uh, You can't just be like, but it tastes great, right? Like we have to be able to talk about what are the attributes that set you apart and really speak in the language that your customer, that they want to hear. So don't try to be everything to everyone.

[00:37:23] **David Crabill:** Well, and Hey, that's the reason why it's so important to have kind of a third-party opinion, a mentor, a coach, as you were saying, who can steer you in the right direction? Because they've been there done that. So, when somebody hops on to their first coaching call with you, what do you usually try to achieve in that first.

[00:37:42] **Sari Kimbell:** I mean, I always want to start with the basics, so in food business success, it's an online program with modules, broken down into learning groups, uh, business foundations, your branding, your pricing cost of goods sold, scaling up, going into a commercial kitchen and then just kind of going to market strategies.

But we have monthly coaching in there twice a month. And so people come on and ask their questions and we get them off and running. So generally it's, you know, a lot of times it's first about licensing, food safety, those kind of things, like just, what do they need to do to become a legit business?

Do they need, you know, insurance? what do they look for in a kitchen, those kind of things. and then a lot of times it's the fundamental work of the pricing,

right? That's always a big one So I would say those are usually the two places most people start and then, you know, it's just, it's so fun to watch people progress and we always try to celebrate wins and, you know, so fun when we get to be like they finally launched and, you know, they did their first farmer's market.

So it's really fun to do that. And then sometimes coaching is about, the blocks, the mental blocks, the fear and honestly just helping people make decisions.

Like we get stuck in analysis paralysis so easily. Right. And I do it too. And it's so nice to have somebody who knows the industry help you make some decisions and then we just keep moving forward.

[00:39:16] **David Crabill:** Yeah, and I think it's related to the mental blocks aspect, but I noticed last year you became a certified life coach, right? I mean, obviously you've already had tons of experience as a food business coach, why did you want to go through the training to become a life coach?

[00:39:32] **Sari Kimbell:** Oh yes, yes I did. Um, Yeah, I got certified through the life coach school in 2021. And I did that because, so I discovered coaching right about the time when I was having my, personal crisis. And I was thinking about getting another job. then I decided to recommit to my business and I found coaching about the same time.

I was just listening to the life coach school podcast started there. And as I started applying these tools and, new thoughts and. some of these principles that she was talking about, I started to feel better. just things were coming easier in my business. I started to separate out my success as a human and my worth as a human is, you know my self worth as Sari versus the success of my business.

And so over the years, I mean, that was, we're going on five years now that, that really changed my life. And I just kept investing more in my own personal growth and my own skills as an entrepreneur, because it wasn't so much the how, like, okay, I have a business, I have all the things, but I always say like, once you get the product, now, the real work begins right now.

We have to do the really hard things of putting ourselves out there. So I just found so much success for me with, I started investing in coaching programs. I hired my own coach, and that grew my business. I doubled my business that year. And he was also certified through the same school.

And so I realized that, um, I was doing a consultant model in addition to the online program and I was building people's businesses for them and sort of giving them a business in a box. And what I was realizing was it was giving me a lot of great experience and I was flexing all of my entrepreneurial muscles.

but when I gave the business back, the entrepreneurs themselves, weren't all that successful because they didn't know how to run it. they hadn't gone through the failures and the trials and the emails and the back and forth. I had done all of that for them.

And so I wanted to change that model. So I changed to a coaching model, last fall. And so I don't do anymore. Business in a box, like, just bring me your idea and I'll give you a business. Now I put entrepreneur at the center of it and then I help them with the logistics and giving them my feedback, but they're running the show and they're the ones having conversations with the food scientist or the packaging or the graphic designer, or whomever, and then I'm really helping to coach them along in the journey.

So I'm basically, yeah, I really wanted to use these tools, I guess it was just sort of inevitable, but I would go ahead and get certified. I added it up the other day for a presentation I did on coaching principles. And I mean, I've spent over \$100k in coaching over the last four years and I would do it all over again in a heartbeat.

It has changed my life and changed the trajectory of my business. So. That's where I come from and I can't help, but be a coach. you know, I always deal with the technical things and we can talk cost of goods sold all day long and all of those things. But so many of the blocks that are really happening are people are getting they're spinning out and confusion.

They're having analysis paralysis and not making decisions. There's a lot of fear about putting themselves out there. So yeah, just it's like helping them to show up and we need these people. We need you to give, uh, you know, to put yourself out there and make these amazing products. Like the world is a better place, because you are putting yourself out into the world.

So anything I can do to help the whole person, both from the business side, but also the mental emotional side, enjoy the process and create a better business.

[00:43:43] **David Crabill:** And I know you've been running food business success for three years now. I'm sure there have been challenges along the way, but, what have been some of the best times

[00:43:54] **Sari Kimbell:** I mean, every time I get off of a group coaching call now, it's just like, I'm just on a high, there's so much fun. you know, we have anywhere from eight to 20 people in there on any given call and it's just like hearing people's successes and really helping people solve problems and make decisions, hearing about the support that they're giving each other those are my best days.

I just love those. And then of course, when people, when we actually launch a product and it's like, it's a physical, real thing, you know, like, and I always say like, I will give you today. Like, I will give you this week to celebrate and to just be really excited that you have a physical product, it's ready to go out into the world.

And then the real work begins of now, we got to get it off the shelf. We gotta get it into people's hands, but those are the most fun when I get to, um, oftentimes people ship me their product and then I put it on my shelf that sits behind me and I'm going to have to keep building bigger, more shelves, but it's so fun to be able to put that product on the shelf and know that I helped. I was a part of it, part of their journey.

[00:45:09] **David Crabill:** So, it's pretty impressive. What you've been able to accomplish with food business success. The past three years, but as you look into the future, where are you going with this business?

[00:45:22] **Sari Kimbell:** So this year, my goal, one of my goals, big goals is to create a, grant fund or a micro loan fund, where I want to actually give back and really help support, entrepreneurs that have that great product. But, you know, I work with a lot of people who, just don't have all of the advantages that other people do.

English is not their first language. they weren't born in the U S they're trying to figure out the systems, you know, just some really amazing, amazing people who are doing great products. So I really want to be able to help with some, crowdfunding just sometimes you just need that couple of thousand dollars that would get you going.

And I want to be able to give that money. And so I'm really excited about starting to create that that's on my 2022 vision board. You know, I want to continue to build my one-on-one coaching clients, and then I want to continue to build food business success. I have, uh, goal of 300 members. It's a monthly membership program.

So I'd love to have 300 members and continuing to create content. I try to create something every month. We just are constantly adding more value to that because yeah, once you go through the program and you get your products set up, you're not going to need the video modules, but I want to make the rest of the content.

And they're so valuable that you're just going to want to stay a member, because of our group calls and we have a meet the expert call and I want to start bringing in more, more workshops and things like that. So just keep building out that content. Um, I'll keep the farmer's market. Uh, I love doing that.

It's really a fun extension So I'll definitely keep the farmer's market. It's a really great community piece.

And I think it serves my mission really well of creating a space for packaged food producers to be able to start businesses. Yeah, I guess that's, as far as I've gotten so far, but.

[00:47:21] **David Crabbill:** Well, I know that you've got food, business success, and people can join as a member. And you've got a ton of value in there. but you know, you also have a ton of free resources, right? Like people aren't willing to invest in that right now. What are some of the three tools or resources that you offer?

[00:47:36] **Sari Kimbell:** Yeah, a hundred percent. I really believe in just giving value ahead of time. Um, You know, just like you do. I mean, you're giving away so much valuable information. Like, I want people to be successful no matter what they decide to do, and whether they decide to work with me paid or not, I just want people to be successful.

So, I have a YouTube channel, a food business success. I have the podcast as well, and those are different. I tried, I purposely tried to make them different. You can listen to the podcast on YouTube, but I have a lot of, more technical videos, like the, how to, videos. And I started. To make it easier on myself.

eliminate the perfectionist piece of me, where I was recording content and then editing it and writing out a script. And now I just do every other week, I do a live video and kind of answer one question, that maybe people in my group are having, or that are coming up with clients. So that's a little more technical.

And then the podcast is experts in the industry and then also, mixed in with mindset, kind of this coaching piece. So those are the main things. And then I

do have a private Facebook group. Again, everything's under food business success, but we have a community. I think there's over 600 people in there.

So people ask questions, and I try to stay really active in there. And then other people are really great at answering questions. You know, I have a pretty big network of people in the industry. So I try to, I invite a lot of them to be, to help moderate as well in there, So those are.

the main ways. Yeah. There's a lot of ways for people to get answers to their questions, and keep them moving along and keeping this game. You know, you can't win if you give up. So I just want to continue to help people to stay in it and never give up.

[00:49:29] **David Crabill:** Yeah. Well, I can attest that you have a lot of great resources out there that are free and, that you kind of lived what you teach, right? You you've gone through some trials and, you haven't given up and you recommend people get a coach and you've had a coach. So, you seem like you're doing it all.

I'm not sure how you do as much as you do, but, if people want to, uh, you know, learn more about you, you know, you mentioned some of the resources, but, uh, specifically, where can they find you online?

[00:49:56] **Sari Kimbell:** Yeah. So food biz, success.com. And then, the podcast, everything is under food business success. And then Facebook is also food biz success. So try one of those two combinations and you should find me. You can also, I'm very, Google-able, if you type in Sari and food, business success, probably everything, everything will come up, All the podcast guests and the ones that I've done and all the things.

So I'm pretty easy to find.

[00:50:27] **David Crabill:** All right. Well, thank you so much, Sari, for coming on and sharing so much, really great information with us today.

[00:50:33] **Sari Kimbell:** It's been so fun. It's been my pleasure. Thank you.

[00:50:35] **David Crabill:** That wraps up part two of my interview with Sari. And as I mentioned at the beginning of this episode, you won't want to miss Sari's workshop this Friday about increasing sales at farmer's markets and events. See the show notes for a link to sign up for that.

For more information about this episode, go to [forrager.com/podcast/60](http://forrager.com/podcast/60)

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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](http://cottagefoodcourse.com).

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