

How To Raise Over \$50k With This New Crowdfunding Technique with Diana Blaylock

David Crabill: Welcome to the Forrager podcast, where I talk with cottage food entrepreneurs, about their strategies for running a food business from home. I'm David Crabill, and today, I'm talking with Diana Blaylock who runs a cottage food bakery in Twin Falls, Idaho.

But before we begin, I want to thank Castiron for sponsoring this episode.

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All right today, I have Diana Blaylock on the show and she has a fascinating startup story. For one, it started in a very fluky way in an apple orchard of all things and things quickly started to take off. Now a bakery is one of the most time-intensive food businesses to start. And Diana managed to do it with two very young kids. One of whom she was still pregnant with when she launched her business over the next few years, things grew to the point where Diana was ready to take the next step and move into a commercial kitchen. She tried to raise \$20,000 on a popular crowdfunding site, but she ended up raising less than a thousand dollars at the end of that campaign. However, the following year, she tried crowdfunding again, except this time she sought the help of crowdfunding experts and used a different crowdfunding technique.

The result? She raised over \$50,000, and now she is in the process of building her own commercial bakery. And with that, let's jump right into this episode.

Welcome to the show, Diana. Nice to have you here.

[00:01:42] **Diana Blaylock:** Thanks for having me.

[00:01:44] **David Crabill:** So Diana, can you take me back to the beginning of this journey? How did this bakery get started?

[00:01:51] **Diana Blaylock:** It was kind of a fluke. we went to an orchard near our house. and we actually got lost on the way and almost ended up in Nevada. And we live in Idaho, so that's quite a feat. So um, we went down to this orchard and they had a, you pick weekend where the apples were 30 cents.

And they had a particular breed that my husband just loves, so we were like, okay, we got to go. And it was the last weekend they were going to do it. So we go down there, come home with like 20-something pounds of apples that we bought for seven bucks. we're looking at each other going, oh, what do we do with all these apples?

Cause we didn't have any way to store them or get through them quickly before they could go bad. I was like, I'll just bake them into pies, sell them on Facebook and we'll get through them that way. so I put the post on like a local buy, sell trade page on Facebook. And it got so much traction that I got booted from the group. Cause I think I got marked as spam. It just kind of blew up from there.

[00:02:51] **David Crabill:** Yeah. So it was totally fluky. I mean, why do you feel like you were like, oh, I'm just going to sell these as pies instead of, you know, I'm just going to give away these apples? I think that's probably what most people would do with extra produce, right?

[00:03:05] **Diana Blaylock:** Usually. Yeah, but I'm, I've been a baker. Golly. I mean, I started baking at home when I was a kid around the age of like eight or nine. And so my brain immediately went to, well, let's just bake these and use them that way. And so my husband was like, well, what if, what if we started a bakery? You'd be good at that. I was like, huh. A bakery... And it just kind of took off.

[00:03:29] **David Crabill:** So you literally had no pre-ambitions for starting a bakery before this apple.

[00:03:37] **Diana Blaylock:** None. And it's funny because as a teenager, I had tried baking for like fundraising and stuff for like a missions trip and it stressed me out so bad. I remember thinking, oh, I'll never bake to make money. This is awful. Here we are. It's what I do for a living.

[00:03:58] **David Crabill:** Well, it's really fascinating to me because not only do you run this bakery, but just from looking into your business a little bit, it seems like you're not only run a bakery, but you're super passionate about baking and you're super passionate about this bakery. So, I mean, where do you think that passion came from?

[00:04:16] **Diana Blaylock:** So growing up, if you saw a box mix for any kind of baked good at our house, somebody gave it to. We were super purists about our baking growing up. So I've always been a stickler for let's if you're going to make it, make it right. Make it good because me and my family we're big foodies. Like we'd sit like our thing that we do as a family is we watch cooking shows So it's just something I've always loved doing. It's my decompressor. So like a couple of weeks ago we'd been baking, baking, baking, and I looked at my husband. I was like, I just want to make something for me. It's just how I get through stuff. And I just love baking

[00:05:05] **David Crabill:** I'm just still fascinated by the fact that you just fell into this. So, I mean, what were you doing before this? I mean, what were your goals before this whole apple orchard?

[00:05:16] **Diana Blaylock:** Well, I didn't really have any I was just a stay-at-home mom like, there wasn't really much going on in our lives. Like my husband was just kind of going from job to job and we didn't really have a set direction in life. So this was kind of like, Ooh, let's do that kind of a thing. In the past, I had tried starting little businesses here and there and they never took off.

Like I had been an artist and that was okay. I tried cleaning houses for a living and that was awful. this just made sense. And we just kind of ran with it.

[00:05:54] **David Crabill:** But you did have that kind of entrepreneurial spark in you, I guess.

[00:05:59] **Diana Blaylock:** I think so. And I never really noticed it until we started the bakery. Like there was something about baking and coming up with a menu and like how to find my demographic that just clicked better than anything else we tried. So this was really, really unique.

[00:06:19] **David Crabill:** And you said that you were a stay-at-home. Mom. How old were your kids at that time?

[00:06:22] **Diana Blaylock:** Our oldest was three at the time when I was pregnant with our youngest.

[00:06:30] **David Crabill:** Wow. So you had really young kids and that's like the heart. I have two young kids, you know, about three and one. That's like the hardest time to start a business. I mean, how did that go?

[00:06:42] **Diana Blaylock:** It was hard. It was really hard. Our youngest is very hold me, love me, snuggle me all the time. He's four now. And he's still like that. So as a baby, like I'd have him either like in a sling kind of a deal or one of those backpack carriers while I baked. We have a picture somewhere of him, just happy as a clam in his little backpack carrier while I'm doing dishes.

And that's just how we've always done business with some kid or other hanging around somebody's ankles. it's been an adventure having them around for the ride for sure.

[00:07:19] **David Crabill:** Yeah. I mean, just having young kids myself, I'd say they definitely slow down the trajectory of a business. So what did that first year look like? I mean, you know, you did this thing on Facebook and. I guess you're headed into the holiday season at that point.

[00:07:36] **Diana Blaylock:** Yeah, Cause that you pick weekend was like mid-October-ish and then we went into Thanksgiving and that went really well. And then we weren't supposed to have my youngest until like March. He decided to come at the end of February, of January. And so I had orders lined up the week I went into labor.

I remember texting one of my friends. I was like, Hey, did you still want that bread? Because I'm in the hospital. And she was like, oh my gosh, no. But yeah. Because I don't know any different. I don't feel like it slowed things down to have the kids. We still took them with us to farmer's markets and like, they've just always known the bakery to be part of our house.

So it's actually been kind of cool to have them be part of the bakery honestly.

[00:08:33] **David Crabill:** Yeah, it's really cool. And I actually, I'm thinking about another angle here. Like some people, you know, become entrepreneurs, start a business, then they have a family and they work through it. But when you have young kids. And it's, it's hard to have young kids. It's really hard to start a business as well.

So it would be just really easy not to do the business. Like if, if it never was a goal for you, like what kept you going in the early days when you were starting the business?

[00:09:00] **Diana Blaylock:** Part of, it was at the time my husband was in a job that was not making enough to support the family. So we saw it as a way to kind of supplement income as well. And he and I had been having a lot of hard conversations for me at that time, because I kind of felt like I didn't have any drive in life.

So when this kind of fell into our laps, I was like, oh, this is what I want to do with my life, because he was looking at it from an angle of once the kids leave, what are you going to do? I just, I kept racking my brain going. I have no idea. I feel like I'm living for my kids. So this was a way for me to kind of like marry a dream with living for my kids.

Cause I could supply for my family and do something that nobody else could do if that makes any sense. Cause there's, there's some bakers in town, but like, I feel like I add a little something to it. That's just different.

[00:09:58] **David Crabill:** Yeah. I saw that you're originally from St. Louis. And you said somewhere that they had great bread in St. Louis not so great in twin falls.

[00:10:08] **Diana Blaylock:** there were a lot of really great bakeries in St. Louis, and And when we came to twin falls. and we were like, wow, So I looked at my husband. I was like, you know, now that we're starting a bakery, maybe we could like give this town what it needs and give them someplace where they can a feel like home and give them a really good donut, bread pie, whatever and just, you know, really give them something good.

[00:10:37] **David Crabill:** So for that reason, did you feel like there wasn't a lot of competition when you got started?

[00:10:43] **Diana Blaylock:** Not really, no, like there's, there's other cottage bakers in town. But I feel like I do something different from each one, partly because I've expanded my menu so much. And honestly, It's become like an entity of its own now. But like we first became known obviously for the pies, but then we also added challah bread to our, our repertoire, and nobody else in town can do challah bread.

Like I do. So it was one of those things. Oh yeah. You're that hollow lady, blah, blah, blah, that kind of thing. I never really felt like the competition was really gonna put me under ever, because most places had, like their one specific thing they were known for like the donut shop or that pie place, that kind of thing. we kind of hit it from all angles.

[00:11:34] **David Crabill:** It's interesting that you have such a big menu because. I feel like most cottage bakers, as they get into their business, you've been doing this for a few years now. They pare down their menu, right? Like, have you had to pare it down?

[00:11:47] **Diana Blaylock:** We took one thing off the menu for a while. I tried to do cakes and I'm not very good at them And they're super time-consuming. I couldn't justify keeping them on the menu. And there's so many other cottage bakers in our town that do a beautiful. And they make cake that tastes way better than mine. I was like, you know what?

They can handle those customers Those customers will be happier that they're handling it. So I just took it off the menu and we've all been much happier for it. but other than that, if anything, I've expanded it and expanded it again. I've kind of come to a point where I'm like, okay, if I expand it again, I might have to hire out help.

[00:12:28] **David Crabill:** And I saw that you do everything made to order, that just seems like it would be really overwhelming. The ingredients you'd have to have on hand. Like how do you make that?

[00:12:39] **Diana Blaylock:** oh, golly, organization is a big thing at our house. So we got one of those really big like storage racks through Costco and it's just loaded with ingredients and packaging. It's just, it comes down to making sure you've got everything lined up. So like I go shopping one particular day of the week and say, okay, these are the orders I've got set up.

This is the event I'm doing, and this is the menu I set up to do for that event. And so I can have everything I need on hand and then just store it as necessary.

[00:13:13] **David Crabill:** Well, speaking of your kitchen space and organization, it sounds necessary. Cause I read that you're in a condo, right? And you said you have a small kitchen. I mean, it's just amazing to me that you're running this bakery and it seems like it's a thriving bakery out of a condo. Like how do you make that work?

[00:13:32] **Diana Blaylock:** I We don't. No I, I do make it work. It's just so hard. our kitchen is maybe 120 square feet. And it really comes down to time management. And going, okay, if I bake this for this long, I can prep this while that's baking and kind of switch things out throughout the day. it's like juggling all day long, especially for like big events.

Like I did one last November, it was a three-day event and I had to bake in advance to make sure I had enough stock for all three days. That was fun, but it was hard

[00:14:12] **David Crabill:** So in regards to events uh, is that kind of what took your business off the ground when you're getting started?

[00:14:20] **Diana Blaylock:** for sure. Once we start getting into, especially like the farmer's market then we started?

to get like a face in the community and people started to go, oh, you're that one lady. I got cookies from you. That kind of thing. And uh, I would say events really helped. Cause when we just stuck to made-to-order, it was so much harder.

To help people know who I was. Cause then you have to rely on like social media algorithms and all this other stuff. And we didn't have a website at that time. So SEO was a joke. But yeah, getting out in the community, networking, and really getting to know my client base really helped

[00:15:01] **David Crabill:** And I'm sure it helped to have you know, the holiday season is kind of what kicked off your bakery, right? Because you're selling pies during the biggest pie season of the year.

[00:15:11] **Diana Blaylock:** Oh Yeah, The only trick is with, with Idaho cottage food laws you're not allowed to do anything that's not shelf stable. So that first year everybody's like, oh, you can do my pumpkin pies. And I'm like, no, I can't, I'll get in big trouble for that. that's been kind of a drag for me is every year on Thanksgiving. They're like, do you do pumpkin? No, but overall, yeah, starting off right there before November was huge. And it was, it was fun.

[00:15:44] **David Crabill:** Yeah, well, you're getting into the pumpkin pie as soon. We'll get into that a little bit later, but I mean, markets and events are tricky, right? Because you have like, especially with baked goods, don't typically have a long shelf life, especially if you're making everything from scratch without preservatives.

So how do you predict how much to prepare for an event?

[00:16:05] **Diana Blaylock:** A lot of that kind of came with practice. Early on. We had no idea what an event would generate or how much traffic we get. So there was a lot of trial and error there, and there were a lot of weeks where we come home and go, okay, I guess we're going to put all this up at a discount on the Facebook page.

Oh, well but now that we've been doing it a while longer, we're like, okay, well, this is what we did last year. This event, maybe we could increase it by X amount and see how it does. And then the next week we go, okay, this item did really well. Let's increase that. But back off on this other thing that we came home with extra of.

So a lot of it just comes with practice, honestly. And trying to figure out how to bake everything in a two-day span.

[00:16:48] **David Crabill:** So what is your production process look like when you're preparing for an event?

[00:16:55] **Diana Blaylock:** Macarons keep really well, actually they keep better over the course of a couple of days. So we always do those on like the Wednesday before an event. Cause most of my events are on Saturdays. So I'll start those on Wednesday, get them all filled, throw them in the fridge cause they taste better after they've been refrigerated for whatever reason.

And then on Thursday, I'll usually jump into pies. So I'll prep, all the dough, do all that, bake them, get done, probably, you know, nine, 10 o'clock at night, and then Fridays tend to be like bread and cookie day. And then it's like a race to the finish to try to get it all done and then throw the donut dough in the fridge.

So I can work on that in the morning of the event so I can fry them, get them ready to go, and then bust my butt over to whatever event I'm doing.

[00:17:46] **David Crabill:** Yeah, that sounds like a ridiculous schedule, especially if you're a stay-at-home mom. So you know, you're selling, I guess, macarons, breads, pies, cookies, donuts what tends to sell the best at events?

[00:18:01] **Diana Blaylock:** Oh, it depends on the year. Let's see. Last year, our big seller was quick breads for whatever reason. And then as soon as the new year hit this year, quick breads kinda like fell to the bottom. I'm like, what happened, guys? You guys love this last year, but this year we added focaccia

bread and that stuff sells itself because you can smell it from about five feet away.

So people walk past my table and they go, whoa. So that's been, fun to bring. But overall, like ever since we started adding macarons to the list, those are our biggest sellers. Just because they're unique and they're tricky to make. And not a lot of people like trying to make things that are hard.

So they're like, oh, I tried to make these at home, but yours are beautiful, blah, blah, blah. And I, I try to make mine really unique in that I will do my own flavors based on some of my pie flavors too. So one of the pies that we're most known for is a triple Berry pie. And it's got blackberries, raspberries and blueberries. And what I did was a scaled-down version of that and boiled it down to a jelly. And I use that as a filling in a macaron. And then one that we just introduced to the menu. Golly, I think that was last week was a strawberry and rhubarb one and oh, that one's good too. Oh. And I do an apple pie one. That's really good. So that's been really fun to kind of figure out flavors that nobody else does and really make it mine.

[00:19:33] **David Crabill:** So what is the pricing for your products?

[00:19:38] **Diana Blaylock:** So when we first got started, I was like, okay, how do I figure out how to price this? So I went straight to Google and one of the answers I've found in, like I think it was a baking blog.

They were like, when you're figuring out pricing, take your ingredient costs per item and multiply that times three. So that'll cover your overhead, your ingredient costs and your time. So we found this really cool software that if you plug in your ingredient costs, it'll figure all that stuff out for you.

So you just kind of go in and say, okay, I bought my bag of flour for this much, and this is how much I used for this recipe. And it'll say, okay, per loaf, this is how much you should sell this for.

[00:20:19] **David Crabill:** And what software is that?

[00:20:20] **Diana Blaylock:** Cake Boss. I think I think now it's all online, So it's just like a yearly subscription. But it's been wonderful.

And it's really simple to use. There were a couple of things we still had to tweak from there because I was spending too much time on certain things and

going, okay, well just going by the ingredient cost, isn't quite the same, like, especially with sugar cookies and macarons.

Because with macarons you have to have all this know-how, you have to know what you're doing. So we needed to kind of supplement with that. And then with sugar cookies, when you're decorating a custom sugar cookie, I mean, each cookie can take up to five minutes and when you're doing it by dozens, I mean that's hours.

So I was like, okay, I need to get paid for my time on this. Otherwise, I might as well just go work for McDonald's. So we had to increase on that, but otherwise, overall, that times three rule has really been good for us,

[00:21:18] **David Crabill:** So when you started out, what were you pricing your pies at or your other items?

[00:21:25] **Diana Blaylock:** Oh, let's see. I want to say we were selling. The apple pies at about \$10 each. Since then we've increased it to like \$12, but really that's just cause inflation and things like that.

[00:21:41] **David Crabill:** Well, how big are your pies?

[00:21:42] **Diana Blaylock:** I want to say they're about, you know, an average like nine-inch round.

[00:21:46] **David Crabill:** That seems like an extremely low price for a pie.

[00:21:51] **Diana Blaylock:** For the apple pies. Like that's a pretty good price because apples aren't terribly expensive. And I don't do an all-butter crust. I, I supplement with a little bit of shortening, so it's not like, oh man, I'm killing myself on the butter. And we do like a crumble topping and that's what we're known for which also helps supplement the cost.

Cause there's not as much butter going into the lattice or whatever. Our more expensive pies are more like 1820 which in our area is kind of an average price per pie. So I was like, okay, let's stick to about what the competition is selling and kind of keep it comparable. We still get people from time to time who are like \$20 for a pie.

I can go to Walmart and blah, blah, blah. I'm like, yeah, but I'm not Walmart.

[00:22:37] **David Crabill:** Go ahead, go to Walmart.

[00:22:39] **Diana Blaylock:** Yep. Pretty much.

I never say that to a customer directly, but in the back of my mind, I'm like, well, if you're going to fuss about my prices, you might be better off at Walmart.

[00:22:52] **David Crabill:** Yeah. You always get customers like that. Have you, tested out higher pricing?

[00:22:57] **Diana Blaylock:** We have from time to time the funny thing was I was really struggling last year just with emotional stuff. And I just felt like I wasn't getting paid for my time and all this stuff. So I was talking to my mental health counselor and she was like, raise your prices. I was like, but my people she's like, raise your prices, get paid for what you're worth.

I was like, fine. So before I had only been charging about \$20, a dozen for sugar cookies, custom sugar cookies made from scratch. And the going rate in our town for a custom sugar cookie is actually closer to like \$35 a dozen. And I felt like I was overcharging it 20, but I kept getting more and more people with these bigger and bigger orders.

And I was, I actually had to go to physical therapy because I was doing so much piping that I messed up my hand. So when we raised the prices, I raised it up to \$30 a dozen.

[00:23:52] **David Crabill:** Yeah, even \$30 a dozen it's two 50 a cookie. And that's a really good price for a custom decorated sugar.

[00:23:59] **Diana Blaylock:** I know it's still, didn't slow people down. If anything that increased my sales, I was like, are you kidding me? Cause I was hoping to kind of like ease up on that part of the menu, but it's just kept going strong and I'm like, okay, well I tried,

[00:24:19] **David Crabill:** So you need to go up to at least the average of \$35, right?

[00:24:22] **Diana Blaylock:** I'm thinking about it. Well, and also I was talking to my husband the other day. I was like, here's the thing. We're getting to a point where this is such a time suck and I'd rather be baking other things. But I think I'm just going to put a limit on how many I do per week. And if I reach that limit, sorry, know.

Come back next week, kind of a thing. I haven't reached my limit yet, but it might be because I made the limit too high and that's my own fault. I'm terrible about putting boundaries. My bakery, it's sad.

[00:24:53] **David Crabill:** Well, I saw on your website that a dozen chocolate chip cookies you're selling for \$6 today. And that just seems ridiculously low to me.

[00:25:03] **Diana Blaylock:** The thing is at the farmer's market, that's actually a really good item for us because kids can buy it. Cause we sell them by the half dozen. So we'll do like \$3 for six of them. And kids love that because then they can buy it themselves with their own money. And that's part of my demographic is families. So, having a few things on the lower end is really helpful because then the kids feel empowered and the families are happier and we have a lot of lower-income families in our town. So I like to have items on my menu that are accessible to everybody. and my chocolate chip cookie recipe is so fast that I'm like, yeah, \$6 a dozen. That's about right.

[00:25:43] **David Crabill:** So, I mean, as you push this business forward I guess it was in 2017, right? That you started it. And so as you moved it forward, You know, you had the big holiday season and then, I don't know if things fell off a little bit as you headed into the new year, but like when did this bakery feel like, this is legit.

Like, this is a full-time thing.

[00:26:07] **Diana Blaylock:** oh, probably 2019 was when it really picked up speed. Like we were baking a lot then, and then 2020 really put us over the edge and I was like, yep, this is a full-time gig.

made jokes at the pandemic's expense. I was like, everybody's eating their feelings because being, what did they call it essential because I was producing food. I could stay open as long as I could deliver and do contactless stuff. So, I think during the pandemic, we waived the delivery fee. We were like, Hey, we understand these are unprecedented times, blah, blah, blah. And so we did a lot more deliveries. We did a lot of contact with stuff. Like we just have a chair sitting in front of our house and say, okay, here's your order.

Love you, bye. But we sold, this is before I took cakes off the menu, we sold a whole bunch of. And a whole bunch of donuts and we did great in 2020 which was really wild because the farmer's market that year, we had to space our tents apart, just so, I think we had to do at least a 10 by 10 space between, so it

looked really weird, but we still had really good traffic flow and we did great that year.

But yeah, that was, that was about the point where it was like, okay, I need to learn how to pace myself figure out how to make this a full-time gig, not uh, run myself into the ground.

[00:27:29] **David Crabill:** So, you know, as you start getting more orders, I mean, I can only imagine that it was cramping your space at home. I mean, did you consider expanding?

[00:27:41] **Diana Blaylock:** Well, actually, that's the funny thing in. right around the time we had our second little guy, we had just moved into this little dinky place that was maybe 800 square feet, no dishwasher very little countertop space. And that was the first year the bakery really took off.

And so I was spending probably about four hours a day, doing dishes, just cause no dishwasher. so from there, let's see in, I think it was 2018 was when we bought our condo and the big selling point was the kitchen because most of the places we looked at when we were looking for a house, there was either no dishwasher, the kitchen was garbage or it was just a terrible fit for our family.

And this one was just such a good fit that we were like, oh, this is it. So I guess in a way that was our quote-unquote expansion was moving into work condo. But around, I guess it was less summer, we kind of hit a wall as far as what we could produce in a normal timeframe, because we kept getting to a point where we were like, okay, we're selling out before the farmer's market even ends on a Saturday and we can't make anymore, we'd hit the ceiling.

So that's when we started thinking, okay, maybe we need to go storefront. so that's been a long road.

[00:29:00] **David Crabill:** I saw that you were looking into a commercial kitchen back in 2020.

[00:29:06] **Diana Blaylock:** Has it been that long? Oh my gosh.

[00:29:09] **David Crabill:** Well, is it that 2020 was your first crowdfunding campaign, right?

[00:29:13] **Diana Blaylock:** Yes. And that tanked hard. So we had been approached by one of the local restaurants. He was like, Hey, maybe we would

do like a commissary kitchen, kind of a thing. I was like, ah, yes, that'd be a perfect, like midway step between doing, you know, the home things that rather than going straight to a storefront.

And so he's walking me through his kitchen and it was not a good fit. Cause he showed me the oven. He goes, it works most of the time. I'm thinking to myself, I need it to work like all the time actually. So big thing for that crowdfunding campaign was just to raise funds for equipment and we didn't know what we were doing it didn't do well.

We didn't even reach our minimum goal, I don't think So that was really disappointing and then ended up, they weren't able to do the commissary kitchen thing and the closest option for us to do that kind of thing is two hours away. So it was like, okay, well I guess our next step is to actually open a storefront.

So let's see, that was toward the end of 2020. And then somebody at our, our local women's business center was like, Hey, I know this company that does crowdfunding. Would you be interested in trying that again? And, and I was so burnt out from it that was like, oh, I don't want to try that again. It won't work, blah, blah, blah.

She was like, no, no, no, they have this whole curriculum that you work through and they show you how to. find your network and all this stuff, you just have to be willing to put in like six months of work. And I was like um, more work, but it turned out to be a really good thing because she was right.

You learn how to build up your network and like how to talk to people in a way that doesn't sound like really salesy, which was part of the problem I had with the first round of crowdfunding. It was just so bad. So we ended up doing that and it took us the better part of eight months, honestly.

So we finally launched the investment campaign through Mainvest. I think we might launch that in April of last year and that ran through August and. That was a heck of a ride. Cause we got toward the end of the investment campaign. We're like, we're not going to make it. We're not gonna make it.

We're not gonna make it. And I was just sick with worry. I was like, oh, there goes my dream. What are we going to do? And one of my investors was texting me. He's like, Hey, how's it going? And you know, me being the nice person I am. I'm like, oh, it's really going great. And you know, if it doesn't work out, it'll be okay, blah, blah, blah, all the time.

I'm like crying while he's texting me, like it's not going to work. couple minutes later, I get an email from Mainvest saying you reached your goal. And I was like, I literally screamed so loud that my husband was like, are you okay?

I'm just sitting there crying on my kitchen floor. We made it. So that was, what the end of last August. that's been a ride since then. We've been trying to find a storefront cause we've had, I don't know, five or six places fall through since then, but I'm not giving up until we're bankrupt.

[00:32:34] **David Crabill:** Well, so this is a fascinating thing with the crowdfunding thing. I actually have the numbers in front of me. And I, in 2020 you started this GoFundMe page. And you were trying to raise \$20,000 and you ended up making less than a thousand, but I mean, you still made hundreds of dollars, which I know you used to purchase equipment, but then the next year you did this Mainvest thing, I guess you I don't know if you took a course or you're, you're part of this group that helped give you guidance and you ended up raising over \$57,000 through that. So I just want to figure out, like, what did you, What mistakes did you make when you started that GoFundMe page?

[00:33:16] **Diana Blaylock:** We relied only on social media. I was such a chicken about asking people for money that I was like, okay, well, we'll just put it on the Facebook page. And I'll just ask people through like my personal page and just left it at that. when you're asking for money, you have to be bold. And I am such a passive person that that was very stretching for me.

So when we went through the program with the, oh, shoot, what was the name of the group we did? Um,

[00:33:47] **David Crabill:** Crowdfund Better?

[00:33:48] **Diana Blaylock:** Yup. With Crowdfund Better.

And they were great because anytime I was like, it's not working. They'd be like, we got this, you got this, try this, this and this. for that one, the big thing was making it personal, like really talking with people and saying, this is my vision.

This is what I want to do. just saying, would you come alongside me in this? And really building a network because the first time around, I didn't know anybody. And I think that was the big thing. I was relying on my personal network at the time, which was, you know, people I go to church with and, you

know, my friends and family, and like, I don't want to say they're poor, but like they're not big spenders like that.

So like when we did the Mainvest thing, I knew more people who were in business. And I was able to say, Hey, you know that I'm good at business. You know what? My thing is growing. Would you come alongside me? And a few people still told me no, and that's okay. But a fair amount of people were like, yeah, I see what you're doing,

and I'm behind you. And it was, it was really cool.

[00:34:53] **David Crabill:** I'd like to understand a little bit more about Mainvest, because this is the first time I've heard of them. And I know you said that it's kind of a new form of crowdfunding. So how does this platform.

[00:35:03] **Diana Blaylock:** So, it's very similar to go fund me and that you have, your page and then you basically say, Hey, this is what I'm raising funds for. But there's a lot more paperwork you have to do to make sure you're like a legitimate business and you're going to do what you say you're going to do with the money.

And then as far as it being like investment versus donations, as I generate revenue, my investors get paid back. the reason I really liked it was I could say, okay, when you invest in me, I am pouring back into my community by paying you guys back.

And so I had a lot of friends and family who were like, oh, I really like that. And so we get like a hundred dollar investment here from a friend, or, you know, however much from this person. And it felt so good to say, I'm going to pour back into the community. I'm not just asking for a handout, I'm going to give back to you.

And a lot of people really liked that. And I would too, from, you know, the other standpoint.

[00:36:02] **David Crabill:** So, this is kind of like a very unique type of loan. Right. And I'm sure it comes with risk on the side of the investor, but if somebody were to donate a hundred dollars, right, then you're basically saying in the future, I'm not only going to give you a hundred dollars back, but I'm also going to give you some interest on that.

[00:36:18] **Diana Blaylock:** Exactly. I think, I want to say it was like 6% interest or something like that.

So like, if you invested a hundred dollars, it was like 160 back over a course of, I think my repayment is like over the course of seven years, something like that. So Yeah, it is technically just like a business loan, but to each individual person.

and the, selling point for me was that The repayment was based on my revenue versus, okay. Here's when you said you start paying it back go. And I was like, Ooh, what if, so it's been good for both sides. And I like.

[00:36:55] **David Crabill:** Yeah, it seems like kind of a micro version of going public, right? Like you're, you have to put out your numbers, you have to be very open about what you're doing and then people come on as investors. And so now I guess you kind of have two customers, right? You have the people who are buying your baked goods and you also have.

your investors that you have to keep in mind. But I guess it's, it's only to the degree that your business grows. So that's nice. And I guess their risk is if your business just shuts down, then they would lose their.

[00:37:23] **Diana Blaylock:** Yeah. And they say that very plainly on Mainvest. Like when, when you go to invest, they say, okay, there is risk involved. If this business fails, you do not get your money back. So I was like, Ooh, no pressure.

But they're, they're very stringent on who they let into Mainvest and things like that. I like that they take care of the investors and the companies that go onto Mainvest because it's not just, okay, well, we'll just take your money. There's hoops, you have to jump through. So it was really.

[00:37:58] **David Crabill:** Yeah. So it seems like on the surface, very similarly set up to go fund me. Right. But it's actually pretty different because with GoFund me, you're basically just trying to rely on people's Goodwill and maybe, you know, what they're getting paid back is the opportunity to get more baked goods from you more readily or, or cheesecake or pumpkin pie.

Right. But like with Mainvest, you're literally tapping into people who might not know you at all and are just trying to find a place to put their money that, you know, could be an investment.

[00:38:29] **Diana Blaylock:** Yeah. We actually had a lot of investors who were out of town which was funny because a lot of the the reward tiers we had on the

Mainvest page were like, Hey, you get, you know, your name on our wall. And like this many free baked goods in the first year, I was like, how am I going to get, baked goods to people in Pennsylvania,

That was interesting to see different people from different parts of the US investing. I was like, well, that's cool, but I'm in twin falls.

some of the tiers, I think for like 500 bucks, you got like a refillable mug. I was like, Well, they're not going to cash in on that. Oh, well, well maybe they come all the way across country.

We'll still honor it.

[00:39:17] **David Crabill:** Well, so this crowdfunding thing is obviously super successful. You raised over \$57,000 and you know, now it's a matter of implementing it. Right. So you said it's been a little bit of a struggle to find a place. Um, what has been the struggle and how has that gone?

[00:39:34] **Diana Blaylock:** So one of our investors initially was going to give us one of his spaces for dirt cheap and it was a great space. But then When it came to like the build-out he was like, I can't afford this. I was like, oh, dang So it was kind of like back to square one then. And then we've tried a couple of other places since then. And it's either been like a bad fit or too much money or the build-out was gonna kill us. We even tried buying one of the local bakeries recently, but that, that fell through just because the again, it just wasn't a good fit cause I was going to change too much stuff for it to be worth the money we were going to spend.

So basically I was going to spend well over a hundred thousand dollars just for his equipment. And I was like, Hmm, maybe not.

[00:40:24] **David Crabill:** When you're doing the crowdfunding like, \$20,000 for the GoFundMe as a target. And you did 50,000, I think, as target for the main vest. where did those numbers come from?

[00:40:36] **Diana Blaylock:** for the GoFundMe, we just wanted to get like a couple of things. I think it was going to be like the oven and. Shoot. What else were we going to put in there? There wasn't a lot of space. So I was like, I had to be really choosy. I think we were going to get a proofer. So we didn't need much for that.

And I think part of the 20,000 was going to cover like installation and whatnot. But when we, when we decided to do like our own storefront, we were like, okay, we need to cover installation. We need to cover, build-out. We need to cover way more equipment. Because a lot of the places around town we're going to have to build out because most of the restaurants are doing really well, which is great for them.

But that means I can't just do like a turnkey kind of a thing and just be like, okay, cool. We can just start fresh right here. No, have to build from scratch. The space we're looking at currently will actually be built from scratch, but I still have to bring in my own equipment and installation costs.

So we had to get a quote from our local restaurant supply store. And they were like, okay, for what you need, these are the things you have to have to stay within code and all this stuff. So we were like, okay, well, we can kind of work with those numbers. And that's kinda what we threw to Mainvest was okay, this is what we need.

Let's shoot for that. how do you create a bakery from scratch?

really for us, it's been, okay, this is the space we think we're going to end up in. Can you do a drawing based on I think, and then tell us what we need from there. So like our local restaurant supply store has been fantastic and they've helped so many other restaurants. So they have all this knowledge, they've just kinda fed us and I'm like, sweet.

I don't have know everything. you know, they'll be like, okay, well you need to have such and such thing this far away, you know, as far as like sinks and ovens. And so I just tell them, okay, these are the things I need to be able to make. What do I need? And we just kind of went from there.

And it kinda changes from place to place. As far as the places we've looked to rent. Just based on the space um, One of the ones we looked at was super small. So we were like, okay, how do we make this fit? But really that the equipment hasn't changed too much because I know what I want to produce and how much I want to produce.

So we've just kind of said, okay, this size oven, this size donut fryer, and kind of went from there.

[00:42:58] **David Crabill:** And are you still feeling good about the amount of money that you raise or, like now that you've gotten more into the process, is it looking like it's going to cost more

[00:43:07] **Diana Blaylock:** If we stick with the space that we're currently looking at, it should be. Because we, we went to our restaurant supply store and we were like, wait, we're ready to order. And then we're like, okay, this is how much it's gonna cost. We need this much down. And we're like, cool, we've got that now. And so that, and that left us a little cushion still in our investment campaign so that'll cover like any extra expenses we accrue as buildout happens, or, you know, In the first couple of months, they always say, you need to have at least a couple of months of income, so you don't die basically. So we've got that set aside to o, and so we can pay somebody else, you know, cause I'm going to have to hire help.

There's no way I can do this on my own once we actually launched. but yeah, we, we still feel really comfortable with what we've saved and have on.

[00:43:56] **David Crabill:** In terms of help. I mean, I know that you do like all the bacon, I think, but your husband helps out with it a lot, right? Like how involved is he in the business?

[00:44:07] **Diana Blaylock:** he does most of the background stuff. So like budgeting and tracking expenses and everything like that. He's been, oh, I couldn't do without him. So for a while, we were baking side-by-side because I taught him how to do the donuts. And some of the cookies we were doing together, but recently we hit kind of a personal financial slump.

So we were like, okay, this part-time thing for both of us isn't working. So he had to go and do a full-time thing where he was working, which will be good for us. But that means now most of the baking is now on me Which is okay. We're, we're making that work. So most of what he does is like dishes on the side when I'm like super overwhelmed or, keeping track of our inventory, things like that stuff that just totally slips my mind, but he's really good at cause he's super organized.

[00:44:59] **David Crabill:** Yeah, you say you're overwhelmed. And I mean, that's completely understandable with how much you're doing, but I did read somewhere that you said, you know, not only do you love baking, but it's kind of a de-stressor for you. And I found that little ironic because I feel like starting a bakery would add a lot of stress to that process has running this as a business, kind of taking the fun out of baking.

[00:45:24] **Diana Blaylock:** It depends on. Honestly, there are some times where we get so busy that I'm like, can't see the forest for the trees. and honestly, it comes down to how busy are we as a family and how busy am I with the bakery. Because it never fails. We get busy as a family when I get busy with the bakery and they, it always overlap.

So that's been tricky to figure out,

[00:45:51] **David Crabill:** Has there been a point in which you felt like quitting the bakery?

[00:45:55] **Diana Blaylock:** mm, mm, multiple times it really started happening in like 2020 when. Everybody had anxiety through the roof and we're all checking COVID numbers and blah, blah, blah. I was like, oh, I can't keep up with this. My anxiety is through the roof. I'm getting depressed, all this horrible stuff.

I kept telling my husband, "I'm going to quit. I'm going to quit. I can't do this anymore." He was like, "You don't mean that." And he was right. It was all totally an emotional response. He had to keep talking me off the ledge. "You love what you do. You love your customers." All this stuff. I was like, "Oh, he's right."

"Oh, he's right." The hardest parts are when I start forgetting why I'm doing it. And I'm just like head down, baking all the time, trying to keep up with my social media and all of the messages and everything. And that's when I'm like, "I don't want to do this anymore." But then when I get that one customer, who's like, "I just love you and you're part of the reason we love Twin Falls." I'm just like, "Oh, okay. I can keep going."

I think that the big thing for me to keep going is remembering my why. And my why is to bring joy to the Magic Valley where we live. Because in a lot of service industries, it's like, "Hey, here's your total. Bye." But that's not my business model.

I like to really care for people. Really get to know them and make sure they're okay. And a lot of my customers have become close friends, so it really comes down to remembering why I do this and sticking to that. Because without that I might as well quit, you know, then it's just baking blah, blah, blah, making money.

[00:47:44] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I saw on your website. I think, you know, you have references to Jesus and your religious beliefs. How has that impacted your business?

[00:47:55] **Diana Blaylock:** I really feel like God's called us to this town. the fact that we're here is so bizarre. Like when we lived in St. Louis, This is really embarrassing to admit, I didn't know where Idaho was on the map. So we, we moved out of St. Louis, cause we felt like God told us to go west. And we were like, okay, where?

And we never really got a clear answer. So we tried Denver for like six months and it was such a bad fit. Like it just felt like we were never going to make it there because the cost of living there is so expensive. And then my in-laws called us and they're like, Hey, We just moved up to 20 falls. We're renting this house while we're building another one. You want to come live with us while we're building our house. And then when we move out, you can just keep renting this one. Oh, please get us out, please, please.

it just feels like God orchestrated it all. Like I never would have picked Idaho to live in never in my life, but now that I'm here, I'm like, where else would I go? Because we've gone back to St. Louis to visit. And I'm like, Nope, doesn't feel like home anymore? Which is so funny. Cause I never in my life would I have thought I'd ever leave Missouri, but here we are I wouldn't leave it for the world. Like I love this town and I really feel like God called us here to take care of these people and give them something good to look forward to. and I, I really feel like because God called us. That I have a bigger why? Like, I feel like God gave me this. I feel like I have to be a good steward with this because this was a gift. And these are the people he gave me to take care of.

[00:49:49] **David Crabill:** Yeah. And I see you not just supporting your community through, selling baked goods, but you've also done classes as well. Can you talk a little bit about that?

[00:50:00] **Diana Blaylock:** So there was a point where we were like, man, every January, our sales drop and we're like, yeah, this kind of sucks. Cause everybody goes into new year's resolutions and they don't want to buy goods. So we were like, okay, well what's. We could kind of supplement our income in that time. And I was like, what if we take classes?

Cause I had people all the time who were like, I just love to learn how to bake like you do. And I was like, yeah, that'd be really fun. And the big class that always does well is macarons because they're so stinking hard and nobody

knows how to do them. that's been our, biggest class and One of the best moments when I do Macaron class is to show people how to know when an egg white is properly whipped. So what you do is you, you whip it until it's stiff peaks, and then you take the bowl off the mixer and tip it upside down over your head to make sure nothing falls out.

The first couple of times I did that. You'd get that one random middle schooler in the group go just too fun to mess with them. Like.

And it's funny cause another cottage baker that I'm friends with, she was like, aren't you concerned that, you know, doing classes, people take your recipe and then go sell them somewhere else like you do. I was like, not really. And honestly, if they do and they do it better. Cool. Good for them. You know, it, the funny thing is like most of the people Have taken my macaron class,

they're like, that was fun, but I'm going to keep buying them from you Cause they're hard. But the, the classes are so much fun because I get to know my students and we have so much fun just bonding over food. Cause most of the people who take cooking classes, they love food, all just a big group of foodies, just going on about all the local places to go eat while we bake. It's great.

[00:52:08] **David Crabill:** So when you started this bakery and you thought, oh wow, this might be the thing that. You and you had these ideas of what running a bakery would be like, well, now with a few years of experience, what do you know now? Like what is it like running a bakery. Is it harder than you expected? What should people know if they're trying to get into.

[00:52:28] **Diana Blaylock:** I think I went into it kind of with rose-colored glasses going, oh, I get to bake all the time and it'll be so fun and it will never be boring. Well Like looking back. I think the big thing I've learned over time is time management because when I first started, I would bake everything by order. So if say somebody ordered like a dozen chocolate chip cookies and then a pie, I'd go, okay, a dozen chocolate chip cookies, and then go bake the pie. Now I'm like, okay, I have X amount of macarons to make because this person ordered macarons and this person ordered macarons and this person ordered macarons.

So we're going to do that all right now. And we're going to do it in batches. So I can double down on this kind of shell and that kind of shell and dah, dah, dah, dah, dah. Cause otherwise, I was just working myself into the ground, just doing one thing at a time, you know, kinda like you would, if you were just an amateur

baker, just baking for yourself, but now I've got kind of like well-oiled machine go, go, go, go, go.

I think the one thing that really surprised me about doing business was how much I networked cause. Years ago I was a shy person and didn't make a lot of contacts now. I'm like, oh Yeah, I know them because blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. We didn't event together. And now they're a customer all the time, I never expected that cause I know like a lot of people now.

[00:53:57] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I feel like you've done a really good job at making connections and finding support when you needed it. Do you feel like the business has grown you as a person?

[00:54:09] **Diana Blaylock:** Absolutely. I feel like it's grown me more emotionally than anything else actually. Because I had to learn how to put up boundaries and say no to people, which sounds funny. Because before I was such a people pleaser, I was like, "Oh yeah, I can do that. Oh yeah, sure. I'll work till midnight for you."

And over time, I was like, "I'm killing myself for people I barely know. And my family is never seeing me." That's not right. So I had to really learn how to put up hard walls and say no for my own health and for the health of my family. So my kids would actually grow up with a mom. Cause we've even had times where I was like, "I love to help you, but I had to close orders because of this, that, and the other thing. Sorry, try this other baker in town." That took me a couple of years to learn because I'm such a people pleaser like it's so bad. That might be part of why I grew really fast early on, but that's not an ideal way to grow.

[00:55:13] **David Crabill:** Well, I'm glad that you said yes to this podcast, so we could get to learn a little bit more about you. Um, As you look forward, I mean, I know you're, you're working on maybe building out this commercial. And where do you see yourself in a few years?

[00:55:29] **Diana Blaylock:** Depends on how many years out. Once we get this launched, I would like to have like a team behind me. The dream is to have like a used bookstore attached to the bakery. And just have it be like a hangout spot almost. From there I'd like to launch a couple of other businesses because apparently, one is not enough,

like me and my husband have batted around the idea of doing like a bed and breakfast or a pizza joint, so

I think I have a problem.

[00:56:04] **David Crabill:** Well, I recommend you do one business at a time.

[00:56:09] **Diana Blaylock:** Yeah, definitely for like the first five, 10 years. We'll probably just stick with the bakery. Make sure it becomes a well-oiled machine. Can go on its own without me. And then just like hire a manager. And then from there, we'll probably launch something else. Cause I don't sit still well we'll probably go on to do a couple of other things in the future.

[00:56:31] **David Crabill:** Well, I can tell that you're not going to stop this anytime soon. You definitely have a drive and a passion for it. And uh, you know, I look forward to seeing what comes of your business in a few years. But yeah, thanks so much for hopping on the podcast. Now, if people want to learn more about you, where can they find you or how can they get in touch?

[00:56:49] **Diana Blaylock:** So our website is mamasbestbakerytwinfalls.com and that's all one word. And then we're on Facebook and Instagram. And again, that's just [mamasbestbakery](http://mamasbestbakery.com). I'm just too old and boring to try TikTok, so we haven't done that, but yeah, you can find us there and you can see our menu on the website and stuff like that.

[00:57:11] **David Crabill:** Yeah. I mean, you have a contact page on your website too, so Yeah. Thank you so much, Diana, for coming on and sharing with us.

[00:57:19] **Diana Blaylock:** Thanks for having me. This was so much.

[00:57:24] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager podcast. For more information about this episode, go to forrager.com/podcast/62

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