

# Makin' Friends, Sellin' Food, Havin' Fun with Connie & Rick Martin

**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 Rick and Connie Martin.

They live in Charleston, West Virginia, and run a cottage food business called We B Fryin Snacks. And they have a really unique product.

They sell cinnamon twists and a wheat-based version of pork rinds. So there's no pork or meat in their products, and that's why they can use West Virginia's great cottage food law. They started their business back at the beginning of 2020. And literally the first event they sold at was just a week or two before the pandemic shut everything down.

So their business went in a completely different direction than they had expected, but they found success with wholesale opportunities, and now their products are found in 15 different stores. In this episode, you'll get to hear what it was like to introduce a totally unique product into a market, as well as some of the challenges they face along the way.

And with that, let's jump right into this episode.

Welcome to the show, Rick and Connie. Nice to have you here.

[00:01:05] **Connie Martin:** Glad to be here. Hi, it's great to be here.

[00:01:08] **David Crabill:** All right. So can you go back to the beginning of when you got started? I know it was just over a couple of years ago. How did this whole business get started?

[00:01:18] **Connie Martin:** Well actually we were out town at an event and we seen these snacks and we, Rick doesn't like pork rinds and these were advertised, you know, being kind of like a pork rind or whatever. And we tried them and, and we just loved them. And we got to know the people and chatted around with them and they started showing us what, how they did it and how to do it and gave us their recipes and all that.

And we kinda took it from there and just started for ourselves. So we didn't spend so much money getting them from them.

[00:01:49] **Rick Martin:** We had brought them home and the rest of our family tried them and they were just like, my goodness, these were great. Where did you get these? Where did you get these? And so I thought, well, you know, That's something we could do on the side and make a little extra money.

Those people were really nice and, showing us their way of doing it, making them. And like Connie said, we trained with them for a couple of different times and brought them home. And here we are,

[00:02:15] **David Crabill:** So I know this is a really unique product that you have. Can you just describe what these snacks are?

[00:02:23] **Connie Martin:** Well, they are sort of like a pork rind they're like a pork rind in texture, but they're made from wheat. There's no pork, there's no meat in them at all. But they have the texture and kind, really the taste kind of a pork rind that in their shape, they look like a little piece of bacon is what they look like.

[00:02:43] **David Crabill:** Well, what makes your product really fascinating is that it is meat-free and that's a huge trend right now.

[00:02:51] **Rick Martin:** Well, you know what? That sometimes will even stop people that like meat I'll be like, there's no pig in it. And they're like, what? And they'll come back and then you'll, you know, we'll give them a sample and they're like, man, that is good. They try it. It's like, wow. yeah, that's, that is got that is the hot thing right now.

[00:03:09] **David Crabill:** It's so interesting, cause I mean, obviously there's tons of snacks out there. A lot of them are very good. Do you think it was really just the flavor was so amazing or was it just the novelty of it as well?

[00:03:22] **Rick Martin:** I believe it's both the, they do have a great taste if we cook on-site, the aroma puts people in a trance so to speak, it'll bring you in. but the novelty of it, I think, has a little bit to do with it as well.

[00:03:34] **Connie Martin:** But all it takes is people to try them, you know, they taste them and they love them.

[00:03:40] **David Crabill:** All right. So you got a super addicting product on your hands. But I know you were trained. Did that just cut out all of the testing process? Did it take anything to

actually get.

[00:03:50] **Rick Martin:** oh no, no, no, no, no. It was trial and error. When we first started, we brought them home and made them. We weren't sure if we were cooking them too long or cooking them long enough. Cause you know, again, we were out of state. By the time we came back home, we were like, well, did they say this? We didn't actually write it down or, or actually nothing video, but um, yeah.

Trial and error and some of the first baked ones we made were salty. You couldn't eat them. So yeah, it, it, there was trial and

[00:04:18] **Connie Martin:** error from there.

[00:04:19] **David Crabill:** All right. So, I mean, when did you actually go out of state to this fair? And then how long was that before you started the business?

[00:04:27] **Connie Martin:** That was probably about 2019, 18, 19. Whenever we did that. And like I said, then, like you said, we came home, just started making ourselves and then I saw an article in the paper in June of 2019 yeah. About cottage food laws and how that West Virginia was redoing theirs.

And, and I thought, Hey, that's a thought, you know, so I called the department of agriculture and went up and talked to them to see if this product would even qualify as a cottage food. And it did. So then we opened the, we actually opened the business in January 2020.

[00:05:06] **David Crabill:** I noticed it was right before the pandemic.

[00:05:11] **Rick Martin:** Right before.

[00:05:12] **Connie Martin:** Yes. Yeah. Cause that's what we were planning on doing was going to like farmer's markets and, you know, vendor events and things like that. And boom, we went to one, one event, and everything shut down.

[00:05:26] **David Crabill:** So how did that first event go?

[00:05:29] **Rick Martin:** Great. Great. Great.

[00:05:31] **Connie Martin:** Yeah, it was, we've met a lot of vendors. People are, you know, where can we get these, you know, did we carry these in our place and stuff? You know, it was just, it was crazy. And everybody just loved them. We sold a lot.

[00:05:44] **Rick Martin:** Oh yeah. The department of agriculture actually invited us to this event.

Because everything with this cottage, food goes through the Department of Agriculture and we took them the raw product, the finished product, and they did some checking and they were impressed. And so, we were floored that they invited us to go and that was their very first event we have done.

[00:06:07] **David Crabill:** That's definitely the first time I've heard of an ag department inviting someone to come out to an event, but if it did so well, did you like, were you unprepared? Did you just sell out immediately?

[00:06:20] **Rick Martin:** But actually we overcooked because the way they explained it to us was before the pandemic. And as you know, all the hysteria with the pandemic leading up to it. And as we were saying right at the time that it hit, there weren't as many people coming out in public as before. So we kinda overcooked, but had it been a regular, we would've sold.

[00:06:45] **Connie Martin:** We had to wear masks and everything. So yeah, it was just starting

[00:06:50] **David Crabill:** So after that, I mean, obviously the pandemic hit, imagine that. Shut down certain plans of yours. I mean, what was that like going through that?

[00:07:00] **Connie Martin:** Oh yeah. We just, we just basically shut down after that, you know, cause we didn't know what in the world we would wanna do. and a friend of ours owns a pizza shop and uh, he said, well if you wanna put some in here, he, and he remained open through the pandemic, he remained open. So he said, if you wanna put some in here, you know, we can see it.

What they'll do. And that started our wholesale adventure.

[00:07:25] **Rick Martin:** Exactly. And that took some to a friend of mine and he knew of a gentleman that lived in his area that had three little gas stations.

And he said I'll take some of these to him and see what he says about putting them in his stores. And he called me back a couple of days later and said here's this gentleman's name and number.

As it turns out, I had done some floor work for this gentleman. and he said, well, sure, you're more than welcome to put him in here.

And then there were three more places and it snowballed from there.

[00:07:56] **David Crabill:** You said you did floor work for him. And I, I actually meant to ask, like, what were you doing before this? I don't know if this is a full-time thing for you now, or I assume you were working before you started this venture.

[00:08:09] **Rick Martin:** yeah, I still have, I have a floor business. I strip and wax vinyl, composite, and a custodial business that I do evenings and weekends and, and such. And I've been in business for myself since 2007. But we started this business after Connie retired and uh, we kind of got this, a hobby that pays.

[00:08:27] **David Crabill:** Do you think just having been an entrepreneur for a while that helped you in starting the business?

[00:08:34] **Rick Martin:** No, I gotta give the credit to Connie. She has absolutely done all the leg work I'm behind the scenes. I don't do anything as far as the internet or working on computers.

I'm the one cooking and toting oil and lifting and tugging and all the physical stuff. And she takes care of all the mental stuff. So, you know, I give her the credit for getting everything going, her drive and ambition with these is why we were where at.

So I gotta give her props. She's done it all, yeah.

[00:09:03] **Connie Martin:** But a lot of onstage events is you, that's for sure. Whenever we do go to events, he's the one that gets he, he has the loud voice.

[00:09:13] **Rick Martin:** I'm the barker, so to speak.

[00:09:15] **David Crabill:** Well, it seems like you guys work really well together as a team.

[00:09:19] **Rick Martin:** Yeah, we do. We do. We do that's part of our dynamic. We pick and play at each other and that's how we get along.

[00:09:27] **David Crabill:** So, Connie, was it difficult to get the business off the ground?

[00:09:31] **Connie Martin:** Not the way we first started out. Like I said, we just planned on, you know, going to fairs and like that. And but getting into the whole sound and learning all the marketing and trying to get on social media because, you know, I thought, well, gosh, I can't just let this drop. Everybody loves these things.

I didn't wanna, just stop cause we couldn't go anywhere to sell 'em. So that's when we started doing the wholesale when I had to get into marketing and all that stuff. And I learned all that just online, just sitting at home during the pandemic really, and listening to you and Danae Davis listen to a lot of her podcasts and stuff.

And uh, that's how I learned. I mean, that's how I learned to do it on. Yeah. It was a learning experience. there's a lot to it.

[00:10:18] **David Crabill:** So you said that it was a friend of yours that, you know, was your first wholesale location. So that probably helped, right? I mean, what was the learning curve for trying to get into stores?

[00:10:29] **Connie Martin:** Well, we really haven't had any problem at all getting in the stores. I mean, you know, whenever I go and talk to somebody and here's something else I did too, when I started putting them in the stores, the thing was if they try 'em they like them. So I thought I've gotta get it in her mouth.

So I made individual samples individually wrapped and sealed little samples and left at each one of these stores, put it in baskets and, So people could try 'em and that really helped, with the sales and everything.

[00:11:00] **David Crabill:** Have you continued to do the samples or is that just to get a store off the ground?

[00:11:05] **Connie Martin:** I will usually provide it to 'em for the first couple orders. I'll give 'em free samples. And then now I don't have time to sit and do that. I'd love to be able to still do that. Cause that really, really helps with sales.

And I'm lucky because my stuff isn't really perishable. Our chips can keep for four to six weeks usually.

[00:11:28] **David Crabill:** So I know you plan on doing the events and then you only did one and that was super successful. And that helped you verify this product and know that it really would be successful. Um, And then it was a friend who just, you know, you knew that got you into your first wholesale account.

So if the pandemic had been a little bit earlier, if you'd started your business a little bit later, you hadn't gotten into that first event. Do you think that you would've ever gotten this business off the ground or it just would've been a lot later?

[00:11:54] **Rick Martin:** Yeah, I believe we would've went somewhere with it because we had gone to flea markets and, and such before on a certain weekend here there. Actually we would sell out well, the first two times we went to the flea market. We sold out within four hours so we knew it was gonna go somewhere.

But with the pandemic, we just wasn't sure it with the response we had Connie would've kept on doing what she was doing. It would've been a little later, but yeah, I do believe it would've gone

somewhere.

[00:12:21] **Connie Martin:** He's actually telling on us here, David, before we actually were licensed, we set up at a couple of flea markets.

The owners let us do it. And we sat up there and, you know, sold them for a couple, few weekends

[00:12:35] **David Crabill:** Yeah, that's not too uncommon in a more rural area. I don't know how rural you guys are, but

[00:12:41] **Connie Martin:** Yeah, right? Yeah. I mean, we are in the capital of West Virginia, but that's different,

[00:12:46] **Rick Martin:** But the flea market was rural.

[00:12:50] **David Crabill:** So uh, how many flavors did you decide to start out with? I know you have different flavors. How many did you just start with?

[00:12:58] **Connie Martin:** We actually started out with six. We had a ranch flavor and a salt and vinegar flavor, which not that many people cared for. So we ended up and it was getting too hard to keep up with making that many. So we just dropped those two. Now we make three flavors: barbecue, hot and spicy and smokey bacon. And then we also make cinnamon, we call 'em Santa Locos. a cinnamon twist, like kinda like what taco bell sells

[00:13:27] **David Crabill:** So you dropped down to four flavors. Have you tried other flavors to see if they would do well?

[00:13:32] **Connie Martin:** Yeah. We've tried, we've tried a lot of different stuff. We've tried making chocolate and uh, uh, what else? Cheeses. Yeah. Yeah. We tried making the cheese.

[00:13:43] **Rick Martin:** They sold well, but just too much of a hassle to, to,

[00:13:46] **Connie Martin:** To try to keep it all up. yeah. Too many flavors to try to keep it all made up and ready.

[00:13:51] **David Crabill:** So, what is the process for making these generally?

[00:13:56] **Rick Martin:** Well, What we do is, I'll have about the temperature of the oil, right at 380. And as we drop the blanks, we call them, we drop those into the oil and they'll pop up and I'll shove them all under to make sure they all, they're all expanded to the size. And then we have a colander that sits beside, and I'll take it from there and scoop them over, let them drain for a second.

And then she puts them into a tote that we have put them in and seasons them and shakes them. And then we bag them, tag them. And that's the process.

[00:14:28] **David Crabill:** And the blanks that you're talking about is just a dough that you make and roll out? Or what is that?

[00:14:34] **Connie Martin:** We actually purchased those. We don't actually make those but a lot of people think we make them as, I guess you thought you thought too. I'd love to be able to maybe eventually because that's what happened to us this year on the supply chain thing. We couldn't get them.

[00:14:50] **David Crabill:** I did see that. So yeah, you went totally out of stock because you couldn't buy the blanks or whatever you call them.

[00:14:56] **Connie Martin:** What we call WheatOs. That's what we call the savory flavors. Those are WheatOs and then the sweet is the CinnaLocos.

[00:15:03] **David Crabill:** Was it, I mean, just because of supply chain issues or you didn't stock properly, I mean, what, what did you learn through that process?

[00:15:11] **Connie Martin:** Well, I mean, really I was stocked up pretty good. Thank goodness. you know, no, it was just out of the blue. It just came up. We had enough to do for what another month, another month and a half and thought for sure, they'd be back by then. And they still weren't. So we were a good, another month, month and a half without thus couldn't get them

[00:15:32] **Rick Martin:** And then we were trying different flavors on the swirls, on the CinnaLocos.

And they were good, but they just didn't seem, we didn't get a chance to get them out there to the public. We didn't promote them. We didn't promote them. Now, some places sold them well, and other ones just didn't, they didn't even move. So once the stock came back and we could get them well, it took right back off, like never even happened.

[00:15:54] **Connie Martin:** Yeah. Now we could still make the cinnamon, you know, we could still get those The widows that we couldn't get,

[00:16:01] **David Crabill:** So what would you say is your best-selling product?

[00:16:05] **Rick Martin:** Cinnamon is the best selling by far

[00:16:08] **David Crabill:** That wasn't even what you initially had tried, right? Or was that also something you tried out?

[00:16:14] **Connie Martin:** Yeah, we got this idea from them too, but uh, we debated on whether to even start making those, we were making the savory flavors and they sell well too. And we probably sell more of those cause we have three flavors in those, but the CinnaLocos are the ones that, usually sell out

[00:16:31] **Rick Martin:** Yeah. When we, if we come home from an event, should we go cinnamon and barbecue are the two that we have none or very little of

[00:16:40] **David Crabill:** So it sounds like the product hasn't really been changed over the last two years is that correct?

[00:16:46] **Connie Martin:** No, really it hasn't no, yeah, yeah, no. The only thing is, you know we learned, you know, not, make them quite as hot on the hot and spicy or not as salty on the bacon but other than that, no, pretty much. Yeah. Cause

[00:17:00] **Rick Martin:** If you make them kind of to your own personal taste and that varies between all people and so you gotta go kind of find a medium if it tastes good to you, you might wanna we're salt.

We love salt. So if it tastes good to us, that means we need to go a little bit less for the public so that going with the bacon, that's what we cut back and they started taking. And so once we found something, when they started selling them we wrote down how we made them and now we have a recipe, I guess you'd say and now it's consistent.

And we've had several people from different locations say, man, you're consistent with your product. it tastes the same each bag that we get, so you're, you're whatever you're doing. Keep it up.

[00:17:46] **David Crabill:** So I know that you obviously started an event, then the pandemic happened. You went to wholesale. When did you get back to an event?

[00:17:58] **Rick Martin:** When, when was it?

[00:17:59] **Connie Martin:** The state

[00:18:00] **Rick Martin:** fair was all the state fair. Oh my gosh. Yes. I tried to put that out of my mind, yeah, it was, it was it, we had fun. Don't get me wrong. It was grueling but it was fun.

[00:18:11] **David Crabill:** That's really interesting. I mean, like, I feel like people do a lot of events before they're ready to tackle a state fair and the quantity that is required to handle that. What was that process?

[00:18:25] **Connie Martin:** Most people have a little more sense than we do. We had no idea what we were getting ourselves into. No, the, like I said, the department of ag here is wonderful and it might be because we live close, but I mean, they've just been awesome with us. They've helped us so much. They've been so inspiring and just, contacts they've given us. Yeah. They're the one, in fact, we set up in their store at the West Virginia state fair. but uh, yeah, we went up there. Oh, this is a story. Wow. It's a two-and-a-half-hour drive from our house to where the fair was.

And we had to take some of the product up early. So we took what, 50 bags, 50 large bags and 50 small bags of each flavor thinking, well, that'll do for a few days and we can cook some more and take some more. Well, that didn't happen. We were sold out the first day and had to keep coming back home, driving two and a half hours, making the product and bagging it, and all that.

And going back up there to have them for the next day, you know, and like two and three hours sleep, all we were getting is that, and we did that for 11 days. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:19:43] **David Crabill:** Wow.

[00:19:44] **Connie Martin:** I mean, it was awesome, but we're getting too old for that. yeah. but we're doing it again this year.

[00:19:53] **David Crabill:** Wow. So um, What are you gonna change this time? Like how much are you gonna make this time?

[00:20:00] **Connie Martin:** Well, this time we have a hotel , we're staying up there closer to the fair. We're about an hour away and I've already got it. Uh, Set up with a hotel that we can cook. We'll be able to fix these on their lot

[00:20:14] **David Crabill:** Well, considering the shelf life of your product, why wouldn't you just make a ton, you know bring 1200 of each flavor.

[00:20:26] **Rick Martin:** Well, time is one reason. Space is another , they're not really big, but when you get, you know, say 20 bags of this and you got them in boxes, it starts taking up a lot of space and heat and humidity. I'm not sure how well they would do, because when we take them they have a drop off point.

The Department of Agriculture does that. You can take your product and they'll take it up two weeks beforehand. So we're not sure it's just a question of

freshness. And so we decided to wait and I guess you'd say sacrifice a little bit of our time and effort to make sure that they're fresh

[00:21:05] **David Crabill:** So, have you ever made these live at an event?

[00:21:10] **Connie Martin:** Only place we've done. That was at that flea market with cottage foods. I don't think we're really supposed to do that. No, now we've had people say they didn't care and we could do it, but we haven't.

[00:21:23] **Rick Martin:** We have too much of a good thing going to do something we shouldn't do. So we try to stay within the parameters of the guidelines.

[00:21:34] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I mean, that makes sense. Obviously, the cottage food restrictions, you know, forced you to make this stuff off site, but. I mean, I definitely could see that you are going there, like that seems like a natural next step for your business. Do you agree?

[00:21:48] **Rick Martin:** We've talked about it.

[00:21:50] **Connie Martin:** We've talked about it, but I don't know if we're getting old. I'm 63 and Rick is 56. And uh, I can't take that heat that long. I can work out in the heat for a little while, but to stand over hot oil.

[00:22:06] **Rick Martin:** And all day it's quite a bit of my work is in uh, on weekends when places are closed, of course, when I'm doing floors.

And that kind of knocks a few things out right there. unless we be going hire, you know, hire some people,

[00:22:19] **Connie Martin:** We haven't done that.

[00:22:22] **David Crabill:** Well, you said that the smell is like addicting, right? So just frying them up. I mean, I'm sure as well as you do at events, you do like phenomenally better. If you're frying them on site.

[00:22:33] **Rick Martin:** Exactly. Yeah, we had a couple, this is no lie. We had a couple was walking across. We live on a Boulevard on the riverfront. It was four lanes at the time they walked across the street and knocked on the door. We had the garage door open so high and said, excuse me, what are you guys cooking? We smelled that and followed it over here. So there you go.

[00:22:57] **David Crabill:** So um, you did the fair, crazy event. What, what are some of the other events that you've done?

[00:23:04] **Connie Martin:** Oh, we, oh, we did. Stink Fest. And it was all about ramps, everybody. Like they had ramp pepperoni rolls and ramp this and that ramp ice cream, even yes. Ramp

[00:23:16] **Rick Martin:** Ice

[00:23:17] **Connie Martin:** cream. Yeah. So we decided we were gonna come up with, try to come up with the ramp flavor. My granddaughter has a lot of ramps on her property.

So I got the ramps from her and we made what was a ramp twist. We put on what we do the CinnamonOh one and, oh my goodness. They were the biggest hit

[00:23:39] **Rick Martin:** The event started at 11 at 12:30. We were out and we took 25 large bags with us.

[00:23:47] **David Crabill:** And at events, how much sampling are you doing? Is that an important piece of getting them to sell?

[00:23:54] **Rick Martin:** Oh yes, yes, yes. it may sound cliché, but they sell their sales. A lot of people, if they try them, more than likely they buy them and they're visually attractive too.

[00:24:02] **Connie Martin:** I mean, when you look at them, you know, everybody thinks, oh, bacon.

[00:24:08] **Rick Martin:** You know, these are good. Those, those

[00:24:10] **Connie Martin:** looks good. I keep, I purposely have them in a clear bag so that you can see the product. And I think that helps.

[00:24:17] **David Crabill:** I did see that. I mean, you know, most of your packaging is just the product itself coming through the bag. And you know, your label. I was gonna ask if you ever considered, you know, like hiring that to be professionally done.

[00:24:32] **Connie Martin:** In fact, I just went through that. That's kinda what I worked on whenever I didn't have the weed ups when we didn't have anything then yeah, in fact, I've got a new label. I'm doing a front and back. I actually have my nutritional panels now, so I just haven't, I've gotta get them improved by the department of ag before I switch

[00:24:53] **David Crabill:** Well, I was just thinking, you know, usually when people go wholesale, that's when they'll invest in getting a professional label, but it probably wasn't as important for you because like, most of what you see is the product and that, that attracts people by itself.

[00:25:07] **Connie Martin:** Exactly. Mm.

[00:25:09] **David Crabill:** And we haven't even talked about pricing yet. I mean, so what are you pricing these at and how has it changed?

[00:25:16] **Connie Martin:** We have a three-and-a-half-ounce bag that we retail for \$3.99. And then we have a larger five and a half ounce bag that we sell for \$5.99

[00:25:30] **David Crabill:** And I mean, has that pricing been the same for a while?

[00:25:35] **Connie Martin:** No, when we very first started, we were doing them for all we had was the big bags and we'd done them for \$5, \$4.99, and we ended up raising it to, you know, up a dollar. And that was really before we started putting them in stores. But I think they'd only been in the stores for maybe a month or two whenever we raised it.

[00:25:54] **David Crabill:** I mean, it's a very unique product and I don't think I've ever seen a non-pork pork rind before. I mean, how did you come up with the pricing?

[00:26:06] **Rick Martin:** Basically we kind of took what they were doing because they had a deal where they sold them \$5 a bag or two for eight. And so we kind of thought, well, Hey, you know, we kind of based it off that and, you know, just went from there.

[00:26:20] **David Crabill:** Do you do that kind of bulk discount at events?

[00:26:24] **Rick Martin:** Sure.

[00:26:25] **Connie Martin:** Yeah, we'll do um, 5 99 each or what did we do? Two for three, for 15.

[00:26:32] **David Crabill:** And I wanted to ask about equipment. Like you obviously are frying. These, were you just using a little home countertop fryer when you started out?

[00:26:42] **Connie Martin:** No, we actually have a propane burner. And then we have a pot, like a turkey

[00:26:48] **Rick Martin:** fryer pot. The first one was a propane burner and a 26-quart Turkey fryer. We basically just mimicked what the people we learned from And it was one cup at a time.

You know, when we first started, we were slow. I mean, really slow. And over time we got to be where we could cook it in a minute and seven seconds. We would have one cooked in. Not a bag, but just cooked and seasoned and put aside tubie bags. so then we got a bigger fryer. We tried an electric deep fryer, but where the elements are in the bottom of the oil, some of the product would get stuck because these go under and then they pop back up and some of it would get stuck underneath the heating elements and, that's just gonna make your oil nasty.

So we couldn't use that. And we got a bigger pan. It's actually a maple syrup evaporator and started cooking in it. And now we're able to cook four cups at one time. So it's made cooking a lot quicker.

[00:27:55] **David Crabill:** So a cup of the blanks. What does that actually turn into does that a whole bag or,

[00:28:01] **Rick Martin:** Yes. That's one

[00:28:02] **Connie Martin:** Large bag.

[00:28:04] **David Crabill:** And what kind of oil are you using? I imagine that's gotta be your, the highest cost ingredient you have.

[00:28:12] **Connie Martin:** Oh, yes. Yeah. It's a clear frying oil So yeah When we first started, for four and a half gallons It was 17 something, and now it's up to 43, 40 It went up a lot. And hard to find. Of course we just get it at Sam's.

[00:28:31] **David Crabill:** Have you ever looked at a distributor?

[00:28:34] **Connie Martin:** Yeah. And we've had people get them for us from their distributor, but we didn't like the oil

[00:28:39] **Rick Martin:** As well our friend at the with our very first wholesale account, the, the restaurant, our friend he got some for us and we just didn't care for it as well as this

[00:28:51] **David Crabill:** So how many stores are you in now or did you eventually get into

[00:28:56] **Connie Martin:** We're currently in 15 stores

[00:28:59] **David Crabill:** 15? That's quite a lot. And how often are you restocking?

[00:29:03] **Connie Martin:** Every week to two weeks.

[00:29:06] **David Crabill:** So is it overwhelming or is it, you know, kind of

[00:29:09] **Connie Martin:** Yeah. Yeah, buddy. It's getting there. We're averaging between making and delivering between 200 5300 bags a week. So, yeah.

[00:29:21] **Rick Martin:** Plus life on top of that.

[00:29:24] **Connie Martin:** You know, and I'm making my own labels. I'm, you know, putting them on the bags myself. What else we doing, mixing up, mixing

[00:29:31] **Rick Martin:** the cinnamon and

[00:29:32] **Connie Martin:** stuff, cooking and bagging and delivering. So yeah, we try to do Mondays kind of office kind of work Tuesday and Wednesday, we try to cook and bag and then we have Thursday if we need it sometimes and deliver on Friday and sometimes Saturday. So yeah, we're pretty busy that way.

[00:29:52] **Rick Martin:** Everywhere we have them they're good for the weekend. Cause we have them in some places, one of them's in a, in a mall they have a lot of traffic on the weekends we have them in several places like that and one in one farmer's market indoor, and, you know, we just kinda make sure that the weekend people are stocked up for.

[00:30:13] **David Crabill:** So have you thought about just limiting the amount of wholesale locations to keep you sane or do you plan on continuing to grow as you can?

[00:30:23] **Connie Martin:** I think, well, I think we're gonna try and grow. I wanna stay at a cottage food, as long as I can. West Virginia doesn't have a cap on income. I mean, we have, we have great cottage food laws, as I know, you know, If it, I mean, of course, if it needs to go commercial, you know, that's probably what we'll do. So yeah we really believe in the product and I think it can really possibly go pretty big.

[00:30:48] **David Crabill:** So, have you actually been looking into that yet? Or is it just something that you're thinking about?

[00:30:54] **Connie Martin:** No. Yeah, we've looked into, in fact, we have a meeting with the Western new, small business association about, they have, you know, special loans financing and all that. we're supposed to meet with them to talk about, you know, maybe doing some kind of commercial, getting some enough money to be able to do that. Because it cost us nothing to get started as cottage foods. Really. Yeah. And thank goodness, cause we'd never been able to do it the other way.

[00:31:18] **David Crabill:** Do you have any concept of what it would take? I mean financially for you to step up to the next level from the cottage food realm?

[00:31:28] **Connie Martin:** You know, it really wouldn't take that much other than just having to have something like a commercial, you know, kitchen. Cause all we need is a big deep fryer and yeah. Something to bag them in. I mean, we don't need ovens and all that kind of stuff. So yeah we've checked into uh, you know, the cost of baggers and I'd say we're probably looking at 30,000 to 40,000. I'd say something like that. Just a rough guess.

[00:31:52] **David Crabill:** Yeah, well, that's, that's not chump change, so , that's.

[00:31:56] **Connie Martin:** No, no it didn't. But the machinery is what it is, you know, it just see

[00:32:00] **Rick Martin:** We need a bagging machine to bag them. As I had discussed earlier, I'm cooking four. At one time, rather than one, but we still run into the bottleneck at the bagging. It's still being bagged one at a time. I'll scoop

them and she fluffs the bag, gets it right. And seals them. And so that's where we're running into the bottleneck in the bagging.

[00:32:24] **David Crabill:** So, where do you currently get your bags

[00:32:28] **Connie Martin:** I order them from uh, international plastics.

[00:32:32] **David Crabill:** I feel like you're the first guest I've had that has been trying to figure out if they need a bagging machine. What, what have you learned there?

[00:32:40] **Connie Martin:** Yeah. I. It does at all. Basically you dump a product in and it, you know, sorts it, it weighs it,

[00:32:47] **Rick Martin:** It weighs it once it hits a certain weight, drops to the bag seals and then spits it out.

[00:32:52] **David Crabill:** All right. So this is a serious machine, so yeah, I mean, I imagine tens of thousands of dollars

[00:32:58] **Connie Martin:** Well, the ones we've seen been around 10 haven't they between

[00:33:01] **Rick Martin:** 7,500 and tens.

[00:33:03] **David Crabill:** Uh Huh. I noticed that you're members of the West Virginia grown program, what does that mean?

[00:33:11] **Connie Martin:** It's a program that West Virginia has set up. They will help promote your products and everything that has to be made your product has to be made in West Virginia. And at least 49% of the product has to come from West Virginia, something that has to be made. they just uh, help West Virginia businesses, food businesses to get going. They advertise for you. And uh, that West Virginia grown building is what we're at in the state fair that's all department of ag is all connected with that.

[00:33:47] **David Crabill:** So I know you also have gotten some coaching to help you grow this business. Can you share a little bit about it?

[00:33:54] **Connie Martin:** Yeah. I've dealt with the Western small business association with their coach. He's been a big help. And then because of the

small business association, I got hooked up with Sarah Kimble, who is an awesome coach. And she's, I've done a lot with her. She's helped me so much. She's been really encouraging and uh, she's just awesome with dealing with your head and then she has a lot of you know, the templates and everything I got my cogs done with her template and everything.

Then she has the calls I go on. Yeah. She's great. That's helped me immensely.

[00:34:33] **David Crabill:** Yeah. And of course, Sarah was on the show not too long ago. Um, Where do you think your business would be today? If you hadn't sought out coaches?

[00:34:44] **Connie Martin:** It sure wouldn't be where it is now. That's for sure. like whenever the um, the one thing, whenever I couldn't get the widows anymore, the supply chain, all, they were all just so supportive and just, you know, help me keep my cool through all that. And of course my website, I used um, your resources to do my website was square.

[00:35:07] **David Crabill:** I do remember you saying that? So you know, I don't think many people have talked about square online on the podcast. Can you just share what your experience with it has been?

[00:35:18] **Connie Martin:** It was really simple to set up. I mean, I just went with your instructions and set it all up and I am not very good on a computer. I'll tell you but I was able to do that and it's just, it's been great. I've never had a glitch with it. No, they do, you know, charge the fee, but I think they all do, but it's worth it because I feel like Square is known but I've also had a PayPal to mine too recently. I had a girl do that for me.

[00:35:47] **David Crabill:** Yeah. I mean, they actually only charge a credit card fee. You can't get around that. but I think if you integrate PayPal, that's when you get the extra monthly fee on top of that.

[00:35:58] **Connie Martin:** Yeah,

[00:35:59] **David Crabill:** And I know that you also offer shipping, like orders you have online and shipping. Has that gotten used very much?

[00:36:07] **Connie Martin:** Yeah. Quite a bit. Yes. And in fact, I'm starting now to ship to some of my retail places, because gas is just ridiculous. Yeah, and I use a program that's called Pirate Ship, so that way I can have it all boxed up and print off my label and have it on the box and ready to go. I just take it to the

ups and drop it off. And it's cheaper, a lot cheaper than doing it on the, like the ups or the USPS website.

[00:36:35] **David Crabill:** Is there a cost to that service?

[00:36:37] **Connie Martin:** No, no there sure. Isn't

[00:36:39] **David Crabill:** So I guess shipping works out really well for you because you're the benefactor of an extremely light product.

[00:36:48] **Connie Martin:** Yeah, it's light, but it's bulky.

[00:36:50] **Rick Martin:** Bulky. Yeah.

[00:36:52] **Connie Martin:** Yeah, we do. Most of us, you know, I do all my own deliveries except for the ones that I do ship, and I have a uh, Kia Soul was in my car and I would have filled it to the max but we ended up buying a used van. We got a real good deal on it. Uh, It's a Ford Transit, one of the smaller vans and it's a bright red.

I love it. and then I've got my logo, the round, We B Fryin sticker with a big yellow sticker on the sides of it. And it draws a lot of attention, but we had to get that just to, you know, cause they don't weigh much, but they're very bulky to transport. But so far the business is paying for the van, the insurance and everything like that. So that's, that's been a big help having that.

[00:37:34] **David Crabill:** As far as technology goes, I know you also said that social media has been a learning curve, and I know you haven't been super active on social media. I mean, has that been a challenge?

[00:37:49] **Connie Martin:** Yeah. Just cause, like I said, I'm not, I'm not very good at any of it. Facebook's the only one I'm really familiar with at all. Instagram, I've got an account that I don't even know how to do anything on it. I did have a lady that was helping me. She was doing my Facebook post there for a while. You can probably tell the difference between hers and mine but then whenever that happened with the WheatOs, I just really, you know, just let drop and I haven't started it back up, which I need to. I keep saying I'm going to.

[00:38:22] **David Crabill:** Well, you know, I mean, for your business, you got the wholesale accounts, you got tons of word of mouth. I mean, honestly you might not really need social media in this case, I mean, do you feel like you need it for some reason?

[00:38:36] **Connie Martin:** Well, I guess, no, I just thought you had to have it, And just to get it out there and to get it known and I'm sure, you know, a lot of people see it and they wanna check it out and all that.

[00:38:47] **David Crabill:** And I wanted to ask about your business name and your product names. How did you come up with those?

[00:38:56] **Connie Martin:** Oh, golly. It's just me and Rick, just sitting around and

[00:39:00] **Rick Martin:** Just, I, you know, we really, there's a really certain way. We just talked and hashed back and forth and we came up with that. Now the center Locos, they were good. And I said something about, they're crazy good. then Connie was like, well, how about CinnaLoco?

Loco? Cause that's our, we have a dog and his name's Loco and he's crazy. He lives up to his name, Boston Terrier, Boston Terrier. And so we started calling him CinnaLocos

[00:39:26] **Connie Martin:** And the WheatOs that just kinda just come

[00:39:30] **Rick Martin:** out. I don't know. yeah, I have no idea.

[00:39:33] **Connie Martin:** And the We B Fryin. Oh, wow. Well, because we do have the savory and the sweet, we couldn't decide what to do. And I don't know. We just said that just came up one day and we said, okay, that sounds good.

[00:39:48] **David Crabill:** So what would you say, like really drives you with this business? Like, why are you passionate about it? Why do you love it so much?

[00:39:56] **Connie Martin:** Well, I think because it's something we're doing and we're doing it together I've worked in sales. Pretty much my whole life and I've retired and I miss seeing the people and getting the reaction when people try these. It's just, it's just amazing. It just makes me feel good that I can do that. Because I don't cook. I'm not a cook so you know, for me to have some kind of food that somebody likes, it's like, all right,

[00:40:23] **Rick Martin:** Like she said, we're doing it together. You know, some, we worked together for the, for the longest time in my business when she was coming home, I was going to work and we didn't see each other, but on the

day she had off, so to speak, but a couple of hours here or there that's probably why we still together.

But no, I'm just kidding. But now we're, you know, we do this together all the time and it's just it's I don't know. Like you said, getting out to see the people and, being able to spend time together and, and making money at the same.

[00:40:50] **Connie Martin:** It's really turned into a kind of a challenge to just see if we can do it. How far it can go, because we really believe in the, you know, in our product

[00:41:01] **David Crabill:** So, where would you like this business to go in the future?

[00:41:05] **Connie Martin:** Right now I'm thinking I just wanna saturate West Virginia. I'd love to be in the state parks. I think they do well, if I could get them in like the state parks at the little gift shops I mean, there's just so many places that I know they fit, they can go and they work. It's just us having the product to get it out there.

If we didn't have to make the product, we could just go out and sell it and push it. Oh my goodness. Right? Yeah. It'd be crazy. I've only had one place turned me down to sell them and all he did was put me off till spring. He said to come back in the spring.

[00:41:41] **David Crabill:** So you literally had a 100% success rate for everyone you've reached out to for wholesale.

[00:41:48] **Connie Martin:** Yeah, pretty much. Yeah. Yeah. And a lot of them reached out to me and I'm in a lot of places. we're in how many convenience stores? 1, Three convenience stores. And other than that, they're like delis or indoor farmers market, like things

[00:42:04] **Rick Martin:** Artisan shops, artisan shops. Yeah.

[00:42:07] **David Crabill:** So you want to focus on, you know, spreading it out to other locations. Did you ever have thought of having your own store? And I know that it pairs well with different things like ice cream or whatever. Like, did you think of creating a brand around it and a storefront location?

[00:42:24] **Rick Martin:** Well, we talked about it, but I mean, nothing, you know.

[00:42:28] **Connie Martin:** I don't know if you draw enough attention for just this product.

[00:42:31] **David Crabill:** Yeah.

[00:42:32] **Connie Martin:** I think we'd need more, just a manufacturing place and maybe some place where somebody could stop and pick them up is more what we're looking at for right now.

[00:42:40] **David Crabill:** So you're looking and expanding, you know, to locations across the state. like, where are you? Are you like at max capacity with your home kitchen right now? Like how long does it good take before you need to move to a bigger location

[00:42:54] **Connie Martin:** Yeah. We're pretty much there now.

[00:42:55] **Rick Martin:** We're pretty much there now. Like she said, yeah.

Oh yeah. It's consuming. It's starting to be consuming

[00:43:02] **Connie Martin:** And I don't know how much you've worked around grease and oil, but it's messy. It's really, to the point where we can't take on a whole lot more wholesale right now.

[00:43:13] **Rick Martin:** But we're too big just to let lay down.

[00:43:15] **Connie Martin:** Like I said, if we had the product and we could just get out and find where to put it, oh, it, this could really get big. I think

[00:43:23] **Rick Martin:** The more people sample it, the more we sell.

[00:43:27] **David Crabill:** So are you thinking, you know, months or this year or next year, like, are you looking into manufacturing facilities?

[00:43:36] **Connie Martin:** That's where we're, we're going to see. That's just it, we don't even know where to look. We don't, you know, for any of this stuff we've just been going online and looking up friars, baggers, and, and like that. to see, you know, to try and get a price of how much, just how much that would be to do that. And then, start looking for some kind of a building.

[00:43:55] **Rick Martin:** That way we know, you know, know what we need to have before we go, with the presentation to get a loan, we've actually gone that far. We looked at a couple of buildings. Oh, I don't know.

It was almost last year. We had thought about this last year looking for a. And there was just nothing on the market within the budget that we had. Cause what we're trying to do is let this business sustain itself. it wasn't something we could do at the time. And we didn't really go into getting a loan. So now that things have changed it's something that may be able to uh, come about.

[00:44:27] **David Crabill:** So you said that, man, if you didn't have to make the product, you could just go gangbusters with it and expand. So as a co-packer or something you'd eventually like to use.

[00:44:39] **Connie Martin:** I'd love it. but I don't know. I think ours is gonna be hard for you. There's not too many co-packers that wanna do this. I don't think I've talked to two. Local ones and they just do sauces and powders and like that they don't do any deep frying.

[00:44:56] **David Crabill:** I actually think that this product would probably be a good fit for a co-packer. I just don't think you have the volume yet to get there, but if you go to a manufacturing facility, if you expand, you have some employees and you're producing a lot, you know, I could see that being the next step and I'm sure there's a co-packer out there that does, you know, you're just frying it and adding seasonings. Right. So.

[00:45:20] **Connie Martin:** You're right. Yeah.

[00:45:21] **David Crabill:** I mean, it's interesting. I'm definitely looking forward to seeing where this will go. And maybe if it gets so big and you just don't wanna do it anymore, you know, at the very least you could sell the business.

[00:45:34] **Rick Martin:** Yeah,

[00:45:34] **Connie Martin:** Exactly. Well, that, that's what I told him. I said, if we at least get it, you know, I had one lady come up to me at the flea market and uh, she's a council lady or something. And she gave me her card. She said, if you ever need an investor, you call me. And I keep telling us we're going shark tank, but I can't see that going at all.

[00:45:56] **David Crabill:** Well, anyway, thank you guys so much for coming on the show and sharing about your experience. If people want to learn more about you, how can they find you or how can they reach out?

[00:46:10] **Connie Martin:** We're on Facebook at We B Fryin Snacks. Uh, Have a website, webfryinsnacks.com and it's we with the letter B and then fry is F-R-Y-I-N snacks.

[00:46:24] **David Crabill:** Yeah. Well, I'll put links to those down in the show notes, but uh, yeah. Thank you guys so much for coming on and sharing with us.

[00:46:33] **Connie Martin:** Thank you for having us. Thank you. It's been great talking to you.

[00:46:38] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager podcast.

Connie mentioned an episode that she followed my tutorial to create a free website with square online I wanted to make sure you know, that is currently a free tutorial and I've put a link to it in the show notes so you can check it out

for more information about this episode, go to [forrager.com/podcast/68](http://forrager.com/podcast/68). I have to ask, are you enjoying this podcast? And if so, have you left me a review yet? If not, please head over to Apple podcast right now and leave me a review. A review is truly the best way to support this show and it will help others find it as well.

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

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