

Struggling To Find Consistent Sales with Tiliwannia Ealey

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 Tiliwannia Ealey.

But real quick, I wanted to check, have you created a website for your business yet? And if you have, do you pay for it?

A lot of entrepreneurs still think they need to spend money to get a good website, and that is simply not true anymore. I am a really big fan of Square Online. That's what I use for my Fudge Business website, and I created a free tutorial that will walk you through how to set up a totally free website in less than an hour. And in case you think free also means cheap. It's actually quite the opposite. I think Square Online is hands down the very best website tool for most cottage food businesses, and it's even better than any of the other paid services out there. So if you wanna learn more, you can watch my free tutorial by going to forrager.com/website.

All right, so I have Tiliwannia Ealey on the show today Tiliwannia lives in Lithia Springs, Georgia, and sells gourmet and alcohol infused popcorn as well as other treats with her cottage food business Sweet Caramel Desserts.

Tiliwannia started making caramel apples and other treats many years ago and finally started selling them in 2015 but after a few years, she added a new product. Popcorn and that's when her sales significantly increased. She makes every kind of popcorn you could imagine, including alcohol infused popcorn and custom-colored popcorn. But here's the thing, with a full time job, kids and other daily life tasks, it has not been easy for her to find the time to be consistent with her business. Tiliwannia has not shy to admit that even after over five years of running her business, sales are still not where she'd like them to be.

But I will say this, it's certainly not for a lack of trying. She has tried many different things in her business, different products, different sales avenues, different marketing techniques. Some have worked and most haven't, but little by little, her business continues to grow. So today you get a look into a cottage food business that like many businesses, is still in search of those elusive consistent sales.

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

[00:02:20] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Thank you for the invite.

[00:02:23] **David Crabill:** So can you take me back? I know that you've been selling food for a very long time. Can you take me back to when this all got started?

[00:02:32] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I started doing treats when my kids were a little younger, so I would do them for the kids in the neighborhood. Candy apples and things like that just to give to the children in the neighborhood. So that's pretty much where it started, or making desserts for my place of employment.

[00:02:50] **David Crabill:** And was that in 2007?

[00:02:53] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** It goes all the way back. Yeah. It could be 2007. Yeah.

[00:02:58] **David Crabill:** were you actually selling your caramel apples at that time?

[00:03:02] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** At that time, it was just giving them away to the um, kids or making treats for our company events just to bring, when they bring potluck or something like that. I would always bring the desserts and things like that.

[00:03:14] **David Crabill:** Okay, so you're experimenting, you're making a lot, you're giving them away. When did you actually start to sell items?

[00:03:23] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Starting selling items probably around 20 15, 20 16 to just start selling website on the website and stuff like that.

[00:03:36] **David Crabill:** And then I noticed it's a couple of years later that you actually started your Facebook page. know, were you just growing pretty slowly in the first couple years and like, how'd you start putting yourself out?

[00:03:47] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** It was just Facebook really. It was more so of a hobby because I work full-time, so it wasn't nothing that I was 100% in doing, which I still do it part-time because I still work full-time.

[00:04:01] **David Crabill:** And given that you've been making these for many, many years without selling them, you're just giving them away. What, caused you to start to want to sell them?

[00:04:12] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Just seeing that people were asking for them and it was a, I could make money doing it. So I decided to start my business. I actually was doing treats and then I migrated over to doing just mostly popcorn and stuff.

[00:04:29] **David Crabill:** Yeah, it was interesting. I, I noticed that you've, changed your business in a number of ways over the years. So when you first started to sell, what did you think the business would look like?

[00:04:39] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** When I first started to say, Oh, I thought I was gonna do the typical treats of the strawberries, cupcakes and all of the trees that you see nowadays. But then I realized that was kind of time consuming and I wanted something that I could do fairly quick and taste good.

[00:04:59] **David Crabill:** So how long were you doing the treats? I know you did like chocolate covered strawberries and candy apples and things. How long were you doing that before you did the popcorn?

[00:05:12] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I just started focusing on the popcorn in the last two years.

[00:05:17] **David Crabill:** Did you notice certain people like gravitating towards certain items of yours?

[00:05:22] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** The chocolate colored um, strawberries. Were the most popular. But like I said, it wasn't a full on like business because it was like sporadic orders. I wasn't focused on it. That much. If you wanted to order something fine, it wasn't big on marketing and promoting. Like that, mostly people that I knew.

[00:05:45] **David Crabill:** And while you're doing caramel apples, those tend to be very big during the holiday season, so, were those like the popular thing during the holidays or was it still your chocolate covered strawberries?

[00:05:59] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** If I did the caramel apples, most of those were given to friends for gifts or something like that. It wasn't so much of a selling item. So it was family and friends that I would give them to during the holiday.

[00:06:13] **David Crabill:** Now I noticed that your business name is Sweet Caramel Desserts and I thought maybe you chose that name because you were starting with caramel apples, but obviously your business. Is a lot more than just caramel apples.

[00:06:29] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Right. Just coming up with the name was like, Okay, well we do sweets. Most of the stuff that we do may include caramel and I do dessert sometimes. I was thinking about changing that, but I don't think so at this time.

[00:06:46] **David Crabill:** Well, I noticed that you also used to be Sweet Caramel Desserts and Catering, LLC and it seems like you've changed it. Now you've, you've shortened it.

[00:06:56] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Yes, I took off the catering part because I realized that that's not what I was gonna do, like catering. I'm just gonna do the sweets and that's it.

[00:07:07] **David Crabill:** So you said that the orders were kind of sporadic in the first few years. Do you have any sense for like how many orders you're doing per month?

[00:07:16] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** No, I don't. like I said, it wasn't business based. Basically, whenever family or friends wanted something or I was in the move to give things away, It wasn't the constant ordering and orders back to back like that. No.

[00:07:30] **David Crabill:** If I'm getting this right, like it sounds like your business really started to pick up when you introduced the popcorn. Is that right?

[00:07:37] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** It picked up a little bit more when I introduced the popcorn and I started out and when I first introduced it, I put it on Etsy and it kinda blew up a little bit from there. It was a lot more orders that way. But. Website orders is not at where I would like it to be at this time.

[00:07:59] **David Crabill:** So you were shipping nationwide, I assume, on Etsy.

[00:08:04] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** At Etsy, it was nationwide, but now that I'm under the cottage food law, I, I'm not on Etsy anymore and I can only ship in Georgia.

[00:08:13] **David Crabill:** Can you talk a little bit about what flavors, and I know you do custom colors, like what is uh, special about your popcorn?

[00:08:22] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** What's special about my popcorn is that it's delicious. And I do custom colors different flavors as far as candy, popcorn. You can go from cherry, watermelon, grape pineapple flavors as such. When I do the alcohol infused, you can have Hennessy, crown, pretty much any alcohol that you would like. It's a big misconception that you would get intoxicated from the popcorn and you don't. It's just a flavor enhancer for those types of popcorn. you can also have colored caramel, popcorn and flavor, different flavors as that, as well.

[00:09:04] **David Crabill:** I actually notice, I mean, I know some people might have a mixed conception that they can get intoxicated on the popcorn, but I saw a couple reviews, negative reviews that said that they were disappointed because they thought there should be more alcohol content in the popcorn.

[00:09:20] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** And that's the misconception that people have because they believe that because it's alcohol infused that they will be laying out in the floor. Um, No. If you want to have more of that taste of, you wanna buzz, you have to indulge with the popcorn along with this particular alcohol that you are looking for.

[00:09:40] **David Crabill:** Have you had to like educate customers?

[00:09:44] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Yeah. But most parts you have to tell some people, and then some people do understand that it's a flavor enhancer.

Then you have those that are looking for a particular buzz. That's not gonna happen with the popcorn.

[00:09:58] **David Crabill:** What would you say in terms of sales? Like has the alcoholic popcorn been the most popular or have the regular flavors been more popular?

[00:10:07] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I have regular flavors that are more popular even though the alcohol is intriguing to some people. But for the most part, the flavor lovers are caramel, apple, caramel, and anything cheesy.

[00:10:22] **David Crabill:** Well, what I thought was really interesting is that I noticed you have all these tiers of products, and so on the popcorn side of things, you have just like basic popcorn. Then you've got, signature popcorn,

specialty popcorn, adult popcorn. So you've got all these different levels that people can buy in at that are different price points.

And I also noticed that you do the same thing for. Other items, right? Like you have all these different tiers for caramel apples, different tiers for cookies, different tiers for cupcakes. Is that something that you intentionally do to try to like maximize your revenue?

[00:10:57] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Well, cause we have to understand that each ingredient, it is expensive to put pecans and things. It's expensive to do. Anything that you're baking from a cottage food perspective um, it's not mass produced though. Therefore, I do that to, Okay, if you just want basic, I wouldn't make you pay the same thing. It was if I've added all of these extra ingredients in, so that's where the tier comes from.

[00:11:21] **David Crabill:** The reason why I ask is because uh, just going back to my economics class in, college, like the concept is that if you offer different price levels for. Different customers, you can get more customers because you're meeting different people's, price needs, and it doesn't sound like that was your intent, but the, theory would be that you're actually able to sell more and at a higher price because you're selling to different types of customers at their price level.

[00:11:52] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Right. That is a good economical concept. And you would think that that will work, but it's sometimes it's still too high, right? The prices at the basic level is still too high from some people. like I said, the sales is not where I want it to be. Um, As far as the business goes.

[00:12:09] **David Crabill:** Well actually was a, a little bit surprised at your pricing. It did look like you have very, uh, you have significantly high prices. I mean, I wouldn't say they're too high, but you know, they're definitely not too low. Right. So how have you changed your pricing over time?

[00:12:24] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Um, When you go to the grocery store, there's inflated prices. I've charged prices and people say, Oh, you're not charging enough. \$16 for a bag of popcorn is not enough. And I'm thinking that's to myself, is too high or it's kind of expensive on the high end. But then you have people that will say you are undercharging for your product. you never know, like you can't please everyone.

[00:12:46] **David Crabill:** So what are your prices? today?

[00:12:50] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** It can go for popcorn, starting at \$12 and up candy apples for half a dozen. You can get it's \$25. And that's, pretty much how it's

[00:13:00] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I mean it's \$25 if you do like small half dozen apples, but then if you did like a large dozen, it would go up to \$72. So you definitely have quite a variation of pricing there. And it looked like you used to on sales of like \$2 for a candy apple. But you're currently selling them for like over \$4 each, right?

[00:13:26] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** \$4.50 for a candy apple, and it just goes into pricing when you have to price things out, and how much the ingredients are.

[00:13:34] **David Crabill:** I did see on a number of posts that you were just clarifying that an order is not in until it's paid for. Have you had an issue with, people paying? It just sounded like that was kind of a struggle.

[00:13:49] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** No, you just have to clarify to people that just because they've inquired about something and if you haven't paid, then you haven't placed an order. Sometimes people get. By that and they're looking for something, Oh, well, I thought I had to order, but you hadn't paid. you just have to let people know.

Even though that should be common sense for some people, it's not. You just have to let people know.

[00:14:11] **David Crabill:** So I know you do custom colors of popcorn. That's a very interesting concept. where do you get your colors from for your popcorn?

[00:14:21] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** You can buy colors at Hobby Lobby It's just food coloring.

I order different brands. I have chef masters. I have. Sunny. a lot of different brands that I have.

[00:14:32] **David Crabill:** Well, I saw that you have different flavors of your candy apples and you know, a lot of unique flavors, but I was wondering how do you flavor your apples different flavors?

[00:14:45] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** You can buy the flavor oils from LorAnn Oil and Flavor company, and it just comes in different flavors. It's just like flavoring a cake. It's the same concept.

[00:14:56] **David Crabill:** So as you build this business, I know you started doing popcorn a few years after you started, you know, selling and then obviously ran into the pandemic. Did the pandemic affect your business in any way and how so?

[00:15:12] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** It really didn't affect me. It's the same. Orders that I do, it's just whenever people want something, I fix them. Pretty much during the pandemic, it was about the same.

[00:15:24] **David Crabill:** So you weren't doing anything in person events or anything before the pandemic?

[00:15:28] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** No.

[00:15:29] **David Crabill:** Well, it looked like you've done quite a few popups since the pandemic, correct.

[00:15:34] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Yes, we've done a popup. Last year, so we did do popups. During the pandemic. They did throw on one where you had mask. It was cold, but yeah. Now to think about it, I did do a popup.

[00:15:47] **David Crabill:** Well, it seems like you've done more and more popups as time moved forward, so have you just been finding more success through the in person events?

[00:15:56] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I like to do the one that I do. I just did one yesterday, well you can get your name out. People see you. remember you. I've been doing that with that same event, pop up company since. Last year, I think it was no year before. and I like it.

[00:16:12] **David Crabill:** And at the events, is it the same thing, like popcorn is selling the best and are you bringing everything to the events? What do you typically

[00:16:20] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I sell popcorn for the most part at the events. that's my purpose. So everybody pretty much has something different that they're vending. I'm the popcorn vendor and yes. They're usually waiting on me to arrive and they're at the table before I can get my stuff set up.

[00:16:36] **David Crabill:** How do you actually make your popcorn? What equipment do you use?

[00:16:41] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** have commercial equipment as well as I can use. Do it the basic way. Good old stove So it just depends on the, the amount that I need to put out. If I wanna put out large numbers, I will use my caramel maker I have an industrial popcorn machine. If I just have small orders, I use the basic wave on the stove top and the oven.

[00:17:06] **David Crabill:** Do you remember what the brand names of the commercial equipment you have are?

[00:17:11] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I bought them from Gold Medal popcorn company.

[00:17:14] **David Crabill:** And when did you decide to invest in commercial equipment?

[00:17:18] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I believe I bought that equipment about a year and a half ago. I actually had bought it, but I never did open it. I kept it in my garage for a while, so about a year and a half ago.

[00:17:28] **David Crabill:** Did you feel like you were just getting orders that were too big and that you couldn't handle them without having something better?

[00:17:36] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I prefer to buy the equipment because if I do events, sometimes it takes me days because I'm a single person having to do everything with the machine versus taking an hour to produce, it takes 20 minutes. So it just depends on what I'm trying to accomplish at that time.

[00:17:55] **David Crabill:** I notice that you used to sell popcorn by the pound. I don't think that you do that anymore. Correct?

[00:18:02] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I don't do it by the pound anymore. It was sold by the pound if somebody asked for a bulk order for a party or event. And that was mostly when I was on Etsy. So I no longer do that anymore.

[00:18:15] **David Crabill:** and I noticed that you have advertised that you do weddings, wedding favors. Have you done a number of weddings?

[00:18:23] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I've done wedding favors. the last wedding that I've done. I think it was February.

[00:18:30] **David Crabill:** It seems like you've tried a lot of things in your business. and changed things over time. You've tried to do a raffle at one point to do a giveaway. I know people have done a giveaway but you actually tried to run it as a raffle where people paid to get into the giveaway.

Do you remember how well that worked?

[00:18:49] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** It didn't work very well because I'm not as social on, I guess it's who you know and being social on social media. I'm not really out there, one of those social media type of people that put my face up there and do a lot of marketing. I don't do that. Most times I don't have the time to do. That's why I know that.

My business can be further than what it is. I just don't have the time. I work a full-time job in leadership. Some things just that I try, it doesn't work. I'm with in entrepreneurial community and it's certain things that they ask us to do to, and it doesn't work for me all the time. The things that they asked to do.

[00:19:26] **David Crabill:** What is this entrepreneur community?

[00:19:29] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** It's a community where entrepreneurs get together and discuss and share ideas and learn from each other.

[00:19:36] **David Crabill:** And it's just a, a local thing.

[00:19:38] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** It's virtual.

[00:19:40] **David Crabill:** Oh, okay. It's a virtual thing. So is it something that people attend across the nation?

[00:19:45] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Yes, across the nation.

[00:19:47] **David Crabill:** What, what is the community in case people are interested in joining?

[00:19:51] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** It's Baking for Business.

[00:19:53] **David Crabill:** Is that like a Facebook group or is it a membership website?

[00:19:56] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** It's both. It's on Facebook. If they find it on Facebook, then I'm sure within their posting, it'll tell them all the information that they need.

[00:20:05] **David Crabill:** Who runs that?

[00:20:06] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Chef Chonberg. Amanda Chonberg.

[00:20:09] **David Crabill:** So have you found that participating in an entrepreneur group like that has been helpful?

[00:20:16] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** It gives me insight on things as far as marketing and different things that you can do for us, virtual and social media, but everything does not apply to me because I'm not technically a baker. I'm a popcorn business, a treat business, and most people in the group are bakers or some other sort.

[00:20:35] **David Crabill:** So are there things that you wish you could do with your business? And you said you don't have the. Them, but are there things you wish you could do if you did have the time to improve it?

[00:20:47] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Just learn more about marketing. Get my name out there. Being, having more time for event. And that's it.

[00:20:54] **David Crabill:** What are some of the marketing things that you can remember trying that you feel like you thought were gonna work or hoped were gonna work, but then they didn't. They fell flat.

[00:21:06] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I've done all type of things. I've spent money on Instagram advertising, Facebook, other ads, flyers. Just a lot of different things, and it's just, I know from being in the community that it's consistency. And I, as I stated, I don't have the time to stay consistent. I don't have that type of time. but it's coming along.

[00:21:30] **David Crabill:** Well, You have in the past done like discounts. I've seen you've offered discounts. Have those boosted sales.

[00:21:38] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Not necessarily. And then two, offering discounts just only brings you discount customers.

[00:21:45] **David Crabill:** I also noticed that you tried to put together like a pack for kids' parties. How did that work?

[00:21:53] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** It was a few orders from that, but I'm constantly evolving. Some things I do and then other things I won't do, so, It's just a lot going on with my business from year, it's been multiple years, just trying to find the niche, trying to find my comfort zone to move forward. That's.

[00:22:11] **David Crabill:** Where do you feel like your business would need to be for you to feel like you're really happy with where it is?

[00:22:17] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Just having more frequent orders or inquiries. a more consistent feel of the business. Even though I can tell that it's evolving and it's coming along, so due time,

[00:22:30] **David Crabill:** Don't you think that like, I guess you don't have the time for it, but like adding ts right, would add the consistency right?

[00:22:38] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** right. I'm, by myself,. I have to keep that in consideration and it's, time consuming type thing to. a product to package it, to label it according to the standards. to have, a lot to do. When I have to do an event, that's just like the event I did yesterday. I had no sleep for two days because I have to prepare, I can't do that all the time.

[00:23:00] **David Crabill:** So, I know you used to sell on Etsy, and it sounds like there were more consistent orders when you were selling on Etsy. Is your sole reason for not selling on Etsy anymore just to, be within the realm of the cottage food law.

[00:23:16] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** That would be one.

I think a lot of my problem is that I do find myself more concerned with doing things legally, which sometimes holds me back because won't take.

I had to learn to stop comparing myself to other businesses that may not be following the rules

And two, I was selling mostly my infused popcorn on Etsy, and Etsy has become oversaturated with That industry or that genre of popcorn of infused. So I just step away from it right now. And then they begin to start the fees. The more money that I make, I'm paying them a lot more Cause they charge you for the ad. They charge you. If someone buys, they charge you a fee, then you have to pay even though you get the discounts on the shipping. it's kind of not adding up when you get to the end of like, that's a lot of money, I'm having to pay Etsy. So I don't have to scale back from that and revisit.

[00:24:15] **David Crabill:** You said you haven't been super social on social media, but you have posted quite a lot on social media and don't know. It seems like you've been fairly active on social media. you think it's just the lack of consistency is what's kept it from growing.

[00:24:33] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** The lack of consistency, and they want you to, one of the strategies is to show your face. That's something that I still have difficulty with. I don't like to do that as far as live videos and stuff like that. it's, Take me a minute to get there. is not for everybody, so.

[00:24:52] **David Crabill:** That being said, I saw a post from you where you said that you know, you're really glad that you joined Instagram. I think you maybe got more attention on Instagram. Is that correct?

[00:25:04] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Different avenues open up different doors. People get to see you, so most times I'm grateful. I'm grateful for one or two likes. You'll see posts on that too, where I just make Instagram posts being thankful and grateful for the small things.

[00:25:16] **David Crabill:** I also noticed that you have started an email list or at least tried to build an email list. have you gotten people on the email list? Have you been sending emails out to people? what have you learned from that?

[00:25:30] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** People join my emails when they place orders on my website. So I do have email lists. Sometimes I'll send out a newsletter and different things like that. So it's still trying to get it to grow, you know, just put it out there to join the email list.

[00:25:44] **David Crabill:** I saw a post where you said your friends will patronize everybody, but you indicating that your friends weren't supporting you. am I reading that right?

[00:25:56] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** That's correct. You know, most times your family and friends are the ones that will not support you. You get more support from people that you don't know and that find that to be true.

[00:26:07] **David Crabill:** That's interesting. I, I feel like. I don't know. I'm not saying that it's the opposite, but, I don't think I've ever heard that from anybody before. Do you feel like it's because you're giving things away for so long and then they didn't wanna support you when you're trying to collect money and actually make some money from all your effort?

[00:26:23] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** That could be the reason, but some people just choose not to support the people that they know. this is universal I mean, I'm not the only one that's saying that. So it's been out there for a while.

[00:26:35] **David Crabill:** So do you feel like it's been a struggle to build this business?

[00:26:39] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Yes, I believe it's been a struggle to build this business, but I chose not to give up on it. I've been going for a long time, be it a hobby or be it part-time. So it's a struggle.

[00:26:51] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I mean, you definitely have not given up and you've been doing it for quite some time. So what keeps you motivated? What keeps you moving forward?

[00:27:01] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Because it's something that I created and something that I want to do even if it's minimal I'm grateful for even the minute increase. Be grateful over little things, and that's what I am, I'm grateful for. And it just keeps me busy, keeps me in the loop. Learning new things, presenting my product.

I'm satisfied with my product because I don't like to put out mess. it's gonna be good if I'm gonna put it out. Of course, you know that you can't please everybody. I've had people write a review on me, never purchased for me. So you just have to be leery of the people of the world

[00:27:37] **David Crabill:** I actually saw a number of inspirational posts on your social media pages. Does the business inspire you or help you grow?

[00:27:45] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** It's inspirational posts to let people know that just keep going no matter what it looks like. And plus, those are challenges as well from the entrepreneur group. We have guidelines and certain days you just post. She said Post inspirational things or testimonials or certain things. But for the most part, for me, it's inspiring and I'm not just talking to other people. I have to talk to myself.

[00:28:11] **David Crabill:** Does the entrepreneur group also challenge you to like post a picture of yourself, cause I've seen a number of pictures of yourself on your social media pages.

[00:28:19] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** And I'll go back and delete it., but No. Yeah, yeah. They do.

[00:28:24] **David Crabill:** Well, you've left a number of them there. I mean, I've seen, I've seen a number of pictures of you up on your social media account, so,

[00:28:31] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Yeah. I'll try. I'll try. I'm still struggling with the live. I can do the lives yet though. I try once, but I don't. And two, I feel like I'm still learning social media. I tell my kids all the time. I'm, confused. Sometimes I'm like, I just, I'm looking for stuff like I know it was there. I know I saw a notification, but how do you get to it?

So I feel like I hope that people that reach out to me, I hope they don't think I'm ignoring them, but I can't find it.

[00:28:59] **David Crabill:** So it sounds like you were trying to really push like website orders for a long time. I mean, still are, and you obviously did the Etsy thing. You've also done popups to. Is that pretty much the scope of how you sold your products?

[00:29:15] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Yes, online. I prefer that you order online. And it just helps track better. It helps you see what's what, and also helps you, you know, have a report. Because there's other behind the scenes things that have to be done when you place orders or when you make money, basically. But you know, trying to push that. A lot of people just want to tell you over the phone.

I just wanna tell you. No, it's a process. I just can't do it like that.

[00:29:43] **David Crabill:** I guess that's a hard thing is that you're trying to. Optimize or makes a process very time efficient cause you don't have a lot of time. Whereas I feel like a lot of business as it grows, it's like, very time intensive for a while and then as it becomes successful, that's when you start optimizing it, making things like the ordering process efficient.

[00:30:06] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Yeah, it's a lot of us full-time working entrepreneurs out here, so still work full-time, still have families, still have kids, and all types of things going on.

[00:30:17] **David Crabill:** Oh yeah. I mean most, I'd say the majority of people on my podcast, they work full-time. You know, in addition to their business. And you got family on top of that, it's always a problem. It's always hard to figure out, how to squeeze the hours in. what have you learned about time management or how do you find the time to do the business?

[00:30:39] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** The honesty that I have for myself, and I'm 100% I am time challenged in life. sometimes I don't the date or the time, but what I try to do is do a little bit here there. Work on my website. Time challenged.

[00:31:01] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like you're always doing everything at the last minute?

[00:31:04] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I do, I do. And I, I've been trying to work on that lately to try to do better with that, but I do, I find myself doing it like, Oh, well I got time when I really don't have the time to do.

[00:31:18] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like you've improved your time management, over the last five years or so that you've been running the business?

[00:31:25] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Yeah, I'm learning that I have to start sooner. I'm learning how to plan out certain things, you know, especially When I had a corporate order, so I'm working on that. it really worked out this time because I was able to plan it out and not wait till the last minute, and then I saw that that really helped.

But that's a challenge for me, and I'm still working on that.

[00:31:50] **David Crabill:** So as you look forward into the future where would you like this business to go?

[00:31:56] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I would like it for it to be the household name for Gourmet Popcorn Adult Savory popcorn.

[00:32:04] **David Crabill:** So why do you love selling popcorn? Why do you love this business so much?

[00:32:10] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Popcorn is good. it's something that most people like to watch movies different, you know, it's just comforting to me, And I like it because it allows me to come up with different flavor combinations and different things that people are shocked when they see that I have this flavor and like, Oh my God, you have this.

I can't believe you have that. So that's what keeps me going with the popcorn.

[00:32:37] **David Crabill:** It looked like you had quite a bit of creativity, that you're just constantly creating new things, new flavors. Is it kind of a creative outlet for you?

[00:32:47] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Yeah, I'm trying to think of new things like, hmm, how would this taste? So that would be good. I wanted to do like a dessert line. So I have banana pudding and I have strawberry cheesecake, I have lemon pound cake, I have stuff like that. And people write, I can't believe you have like banana pudding popcorn and stuff like that.

So, yeah.

[00:33:07] **David Crabill:** You do have a very large array of different types of items, different flavors. Ingredients like You must just have so many things on hand.

[00:33:18] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Yeah, I keep some things far as the flavors on hand. I buy bulk Walmart popcorn and different like that. But yeah, it's the beginning to be Bit much for the house. So right now, currently we are in construction to my basement to be able to add me an area. I'm having a kitchen put in my basement so I can move of the top of my house to the bottom.

[00:33:41] **David Crabill:** have you thought about turning that into like a commercial kitchen down there so that you can do even more like you could ship nationwide legally?

[00:33:51] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Oh, there's some thoughts I need to ask about that. I was just gonna get a regular kitchen, like a little kitchenette down there.

[00:34:00] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I mean, I can't say it's super easy or super inexpensive to do it, but if you're building. Kitchen anyway. And you haven't built it yet? I'm not sure how much extra cost it would be. I'm sure there would be a significant extra cost. But definitely something that you should look into, talk to the health department or maybe in Georgia's Ag Department Just talk to them and figure out what they would need for it to be licensed and inspected as a commercial kitchen.

and if you have that, then you would be free to ship nationwide, sell on Etsy, do any of that legally, and you'd be able to produce most anything that you wanted.

[00:34:39] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Right.

[00:34:40] **David Crabill:** Well thank you so much to Tiliwannia for coming on the show.

Now, if people would like to learn more about your business, how can they find you or how can they reach out?

[00:34:51] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** I'm on Instagram and Facebook with Sweet Caramel Desserts. My website is www.sweetcarameldesserts.com if you wanna reach out via email is treats@sweetcaramel.com, and that's how you can reach me.

[00:35:10] **David Crabill:** Perfect. Well, thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today.

[00:35:14] **Tiliwannia Ealey:** Thank you.

[00:35:16] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager Podcast.

For more information about this episode, go to forrager.com/podcast/73

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