

# Beautiful Chaos with Chelsa Smith

**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 Chelsa Smith. 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?

[00:00:19] A lot of entrepreneurs still think they need to spend money to get a good website, and that is simply not true anymore. I'm 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 one hour.

[00:00:38] 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 out there for most cottage food businesses. So if you want to learn more, you can watch my free tutorial by going to [forrager.com/website](https://forrager.com/website).

[00:00:56] All right, so I have Chelsa Smith on the show today. Chelsa lives in Des Moines, Iowa and sells sourdough breads, focaccia and donuts with her cottage food bakery Bread by Chelsa B. Chelsa never intended to start a bakery, but she discovered the world of sourdough in late 2019 and has been super passionate about it ever since.

[00:01:18] As she improved her bread making skills during the pandemic, more and more people started asking for her bread, and by 2021 she officially opened her business. Few bakers have been swept to success as quickly as Chelsa has. Only four months after starting the bakery, she quit her full-time job to go all in on this business.

[00:01:39] And despite hiring help and continuously adding commercial equipment to her home, she has not been able to keep up with demand in her first year of business lines as long as a block would form at her pop-up events. And now she's switched to doing mostly wholesale to make the business more sustainable.

[00:01:59] She now has over 16,000 Instagram followers. And for Chelsa, the challenge has not been finding customers. It's been finding balance between

prioritizing the business and her young family. In this episode, she shares what she's learned from the ups and downs of her crazy business journey. And with that, let's jump right into this episode.

[00:02:23] Welcome to the show. Chelsa. Nice to have you here.

[00:02:27] **Chelsa Smith:** Thanks for having me, David. I appreciate it.

[00:02:30] **David Crabill:** Chelsa, can you take me back to how this journey got started?

[00:02:34] **Chelsa Smith:** Yeah, I'd love to. So I started baking sourdough in early 2020. I was visiting family in Idaho and my mom gave me a sourdough starter. Then I came back to Iowa, and I started baking and just fell in love with it and became obsessed and was baking two or three times a week just to master sourdough in general.

[00:02:55] We all rolled into the pandemic and I had a whole lot of time to bake. I was working a full-time job at that point for a men's clothing company out of New York. I worked as a merchant and did all sorts of behind the scenes work for them. The company was called Todd Snyder, so I was doing that staying home with my family and baking all the time.

[00:03:14] And as the year rolled on, I was able to participate in bakers Against Racism and then some other events throughout the city and then, I kept baking by the end of 2020 I was having friends reach out and wanting to do personal orders, and so I decided to launch my business. So Bread by Chelsa B was officially launched in January of 2021.

[00:03:36] And it's a long winding road, but here we are three years later.

[00:03:39] **David Crabill:** Yeah. So your former job, which I know you, you left do you feel like any of the skills in that helped you when you decided to start a business?

[00:03:51] **Chelsa Smith:** I worked for a long time in customer service and in retail positions that, we're at the heart of running a business and working with people.

[00:03:59] And then when I worked for Todd Snyder, I did a lot of costing, did a lot of online merchandising working with people, collaborating. So I would say absolutely, I think all of the roles that I've played kind of up to launching

my bakery really put me in a position to understand how businesses work and give me hands on training to really launch my own.

[00:04:19] **David Crabill:** I know this whole sourdough world was pretty new to you, right? Like how did you learn all the skills during uh, the pandemic?

[00:04:29] **Chelsa Smith:** Yeah. So I started baking about two months before the pandemic started. There was this great video on YouTube by Sarah Owens. She wrote a James Beard Award winning book called Sourdough. She filmed a video on YouTube with food 52, where she walked through step-by-step, kind of her basic sourdough recipe.

[00:04:46] And I just watched that video hundreds of times and took notes. I got books from the library. I just really used my resources to. Teach myself how to make bread. When I say I became obsessed, it was like a fire was lit in my belly and I, I can remember going to bed and I wouldn't think about anything else besides bread and I would get up the next day and want to learn even more.

[00:05:13] You know, the internet was full of ton of information. I used Reddit and YouTube, and at that time there were a few sourdough accounts on Instagram and I had just like this wild appetite for as much bread information as I could get. And you know, I was constantly trying new recipes and was just making bread, like I said, two to three times a week.

[00:05:34] And then I would not just make one loaf if I'd make two loaves. So I was making bread and giving it away. And then once I felt like I mastered one recipe, I progressed onto the next. And I just couldn't think about anything else. I mean, it was a good time. We didn't really have anywhere to go or anything to do.

[00:05:50] And truthfully, I don't think I realized until June of 2020 that there was this kind of I guess I was part of that sourdough world that had emerged during the pandemic. But I honestly didn't realize that other people were becoming quite as obsessed with it as I was. So, you know, I originally decided that I wanted to bake because.

[00:06:08] We have some really great bread here or good bread available here in Des Moines where I live. But I just didn't feel like there was any of that artisan, handmade sourdough that I was looking for growing up in Idaho. It's a pretty big Ag state and we're located next to Montana and Washington and Oregon, which they also produce a lot of wheat.

[00:06:28] I know it doesn't seem super close, but San Francisco is about 12 hours from Boise where I grew up, and there was some really great bakeries and I had grown up eating this really fantastic artisan bread. I lived in Switzerland for a short time after college. And I worked over there and I, was a recent college graduate and they speak French there.

[00:06:46] So it's very influenced by the French culture and. I would sustain myself on bread and literal French cheese, like gruyere, and that was the majority of what I ate while I was there. So bread had always played a pretty big story in my life. And I just wasn't finding the bread that I wanted here, so I, I just thought, well, I might as well learn how to make it for my family. it's just this winding beautiful love story of me and bread.

[00:07:09] **David Crabill:** Why do you think you were so, you know, captivated by this world of sourdough? I mean, had you been thinking about starting a bakery at some point?

[00:07:18] **Chelsa Smith:** Oh, absolutely not. recently kind of was thinking back through my life my mom is an incredible cook. She is a very much a nineties mom, inspired by Martha Stewart.

[00:07:29] Um, food has always played a really big role, but I don't think I could have ever imagined that I would be running a bakery. to be honest with you, I never imagined being an entrepreneur.

[00:07:38] I wish I'd known when I was 2022 uh, looking back at my memories that I considered going into hospitality and food in some senses. But I think it found me just when it was supposed to. And now here we are and I rent a bakery out of my house.

[00:07:51] I know I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be running a bakery. I can't imagine doing anything else at this point. I also have feel like I found myself in the food industry. I feel more at home here than, you know, with the colleagues and the other people in the hospitality than I have in any other industry.

[00:08:08] **David Crabill:** So when did you start to have this feeling like, this could be more than a hobby.

[00:08:13] **Chelsa Smith:** I think people started to ask me I was giving away so much bread, and then some people would say, Hey, can I get two loaves for Friday night? I had a friend who owned a restaurant in town and they were

catering an event for a birthday, and she asked me if I could bake her six loaves of bread,

[00:08:28] she had mentioned that she'd had the bread at a friend's house, a friend of a friend. She asked me if I'd make some loaves for her and I said yes. And then afterwards she came back and was like, what would it take for you to make 38 loaves of bread? I kind of want to do this. you know, at the time she wanted to create like a wine club and maybe you got a loaf of bread with a wine each month.

[00:08:50] the number was so big I couldn't imagine making 38 loaves of bread. But I sort of just tucked that question away. I said, no, because I mean, I could only bake four loaves an hour at that point. So, I would have nearly taken me all day to just make this bread. But I just tucked that away and it kept itching at me inside being like, what would it take to make 36 loaves of bread?

[00:09:09] What would it, I couldn't stop thinking about it. And then people just kept asking. They're like, do you think you're going to do something with this? Do you think you're going to take this hobby and build a bakery? Do you think you're going to start offering these things? And I resisted it for a really long time because it felt.

[00:09:22] Like I, I wasn't sure that I wanted to take my hobby into a business, but I felt like something was tapping me on the shoulder and I was really trying to listen to my intuition. And my husband and I talked about it over and over and over again. Like, do we do this? Do we do this? Do we do this?

[00:09:34] And then finally I was like, let's just see what happens. And so for Thanksgiving and Christmas in 2020, we just tested what it would be like, kind of, to get a test run of like, if we let people order 12 loaves. at that point I thought I could make like six focaccia and six sourdough, or maybe it was a bit more than that, I can't quite remember.

[00:09:53] And then I created a little spreadsheet and sent it out to some friends and family. I think at that point I had talked with a few of the other home-based businesses that had popped up in Des Moines and just asked them, how are you doing this? What are you doing? What's the response been?

[00:10:08] We just gave it a go and then it took off very quickly. We had very successful orders, and then I was like, well, let's give this a go as we go into 2021 and see what happens. And had a plan. I was working full-time still. I thought I would, work during the week and bake on the weekends.

[00:10:23] Because we still weren't going anywhere. We still weren't doing anything. And it just, took off. And then I couldn't, bake enough became very challenging for me to balance my full-time job with what we knew the bakery could be. And so in April of 2021, I left my full-time job and I've been baking full-time ever since then.

[00:10:41] **David Crabill:** You said you resisted turn it into a business. Like what was the feeling like when you decide to leave a traditional job and go into this full-time?

[00:10:51] **Chelsa Smith:** You know, we had been considering it for such a long time. I had a really good business coach at that point. They're in Des Moines here. There's an organization called the Des Moines Partnership, which is a part of the Chamber of Commerce, and they offered small business coaching for free.

[00:11:04] And early on in 2021, I'd reached out to them and just asked to be on the list of people who could get coached. And so I was meeting with other small businesses at that time and meeting with this coach and really just trying to plan out my life to see, one, whether or not I could continue to balance both jobs and two, if I didn't, which is what it came down to what life could look like.

[00:11:24] If I decided to bake full-time you asked what the feeling was. I think it was a combination of there was just kind of this knowingness that like, I could do it, but also I think I was absolutely terrified, like, could I do this? Could I actually do this? There really wasn't a blueprint that I'd seen for what I was doing, and I didn't know anyone else.

[00:11:43] I had other friends that were, had cookie businesses or pie businesses, but gosh, I didn't know what I was going to do, but I, I did know that I'm incredibly determined and ambitious and so, If anything, I was just going to go for it.

[00:11:56] **David Crabill:** Were you concerned that turning this into a business would sap the love that you had for baking?

[00:12:04] **Chelsa Smith:** I was a little concerned, but at that point I was already baking so much that it was too much, more than my family could eat. and I didn't want to stop baking. So I think it was a balancing act. I kept wanting to read more books and try new things and buy more equipment.

[00:12:18] And um, when I say I'm upset was obsessed, like, I'm not kidding. I think it takes that kind of obsession launch a business and be successful. And it was just like coursing through my veins, like to just bake constantly.

[00:12:30] **David Crabill:** It's one thing to love baking. It's another thing to turn it into a business. Right. And you said that you got a business coach. I also saw you did something pretty unique that you met with female entrepreneurs like multiple times a month. Is that right?

[00:12:46] **Chelsa Smith:** Yeah, so I kind of um, I have been incredibly blessed in my life to be surrounded by an amazing group of women, many of which are entrepreneurs themselves.

[00:12:55] And so I sort of just, Made a list of people I respected in the community or businesses that I respected, and then got email addresses or connections from other people and decided that I was going to meet with one female and business owner a month. Which quickly turned into two or three just because I tend to be a maximalist in certain things.

[00:13:14] And just the things that I learned through those meetings and those coffees. I can try to do it regularly still. It's a little bit harder now, but I gained so much knowledge and everyone was so generous with what they shared. I think it really set me up in a good position to launch my business and also build community right away.

[00:13:33] **David Crabill:** And I saw that you actually volunteered one time to get experience in a bakery?

[00:13:39] **Chelsa Smith:** Yeah, so there's a wonderful gentleman who is named Aaron, who is he lives in Mount Vernon, Iowa, which is about two and a half hours from here. He has a bakery that's James Beard, nominated bakery, called the Local Crumb

[00:13:52] I just reached out to him and literally asked if I could bake with him at some point. And he said yes. So I went over to Mount Vernon. We baked together for two days. And he's been a tremendous mentor to me and he he's been huge influence on my baking career.

[00:14:06] **David Crabill:** So when you finally decided to turn this into business at the beginning of 2021, I can't remember if Iowa had multiple laws at that point, I think they did. Like which route did you go through legally?

[00:14:19] **Chelsa Smith:** Yeah. So at that point, the laws were kind of all over the place. So I chose the route to become what I think at that time was called a certified home bakery or home baking establishment.

[00:14:30] I can't quite remember which one it was. But essentially it said that I was allowed to sell out of my home. There was a list of goods that I could and couldn't sell and that I was allowed to do wholesale. And I chose early on to get that license just because I liked the idea of having the ability to potentially have a wholesale model if I wanted to.

[00:14:50] Which I did. About halfway through my first year of business, I started selling wholesale bread to a local farm stand. And just for me at that point, I tend to be a rule follower, so it made me feel like I was checking all the boxes. It was a challenging thing to get the license.

[00:15:05] It was like \$50 and we had a home inspection. my home kitchen I think in total is about 400 square feet. So It's not big, but it's not small. So. I just got that space license. It has pocket doors on it. I live in a ranch style house and we had to be able to prove that if you had animals, you could keep them out of the kitchen, which I was able to do.

[00:15:26] We have a cat, so yeah, that's it. Got the license. At that point it said that you could only sell up to \$25,000 out of your bakery. So there was a lot of gray area in that. So I just worked with my inspector to really figure out what I couldn't sell and how I could do it.

[00:15:43] And I've been incredibly fortunate that I do have a great inspector. When I would have questions, I would just call him up and he would say, I feel comfortable with this, or, I don't feel comfortable with this.

[00:15:54] Um, So there's a new law. The Food Freedom Act was passed last March, and now we can sell perishable foods, which is why I sell to my wholesalers take and bake rolls, and then we'll start with pizza dough, hopefully this spring. so

[00:16:07] my inspectors have been incredibly helpful.

[00:16:11] you know, they tell me all the time, like, our job is not to stop you from selling. Our job is to be a partner to you and make sure that people are staying safe, but also to ensure that you have a successful small business. and that's been my experience when I've worked with them.



[00:16:23] **David Crabill:** Yeah. So when you started, what did you actually start selling and uh, what do you now sell today?

[00:16:30] **Chelsa Smith:** we did a lot of things. I mean, primarily focused on sourdough baked goods. So when I started, we did, we did the traditional sourdough boules and batards. I did a lot of sourdough focaccia. We did some buns, Um, I really leaned into the sourdough donuts as I got halfway through the year because I was still baking out of my home oven that I had. It was the middle of the pandemic. I had ordered bread ovens. But you know, the supply chain was. So challenging. So it took nearly nine to 10 months to get here. So we really leaned into things that didn't require.

[00:17:04] Oven time and the sourdough donuts were tremendous for that, and they were a huge hit. Um, And from sales perspective, it really turned me in from being a, small business to like a thriving business.

[00:17:16] I do still do the sourdough Donuts. I don't do them quite as often anymore because they are a lot of work.

[00:17:21] And right now, while I do have some commercial equipment in my home, I don't have a commercial proofer, so we ambient proof everything. And there's just, there's such big temperature swings in my house that now. Anytime I do a popup, I do about 300 donuts. I think when I originally started, we were doing just around a hundred.

[00:17:37] Having to ambient proof 300 donuts and have them already for frying or there's a lot of challenges with that. So,

[00:17:44] **David Crabill:** So the sourdough donut is quite a unique, product. And it's interesting that you, kind of leveraged them to take the load off of your oven. And I was just thinking like, I know you did a lot of sales in that first year of business. Like what was it like to, be producing all that bread out of, I think, what was it, just one home oven?

[00:18:08] **Chelsa Smith:** Yeah, It was pretty exhausting. Like I, don't think I could have done it longer than I did. It was a lot, you know, I think it's that fire in my belly that kept me doing it week after week because, we would have a successful week and then we would be like, well, how much more can we do?

[00:18:25] Because it would seem like you know, there was a little bit of extra demand that we weren't fulfilling. And I was really paying attention to my sales, really paying attention to my customers. I was doing both direct to consumer

sales, so selling out of my house, I'm doing pre-orders where people would come pick up.

[00:18:40] I would do those about every other week. And then on the in between weeks we would do pop-ups. So I started doing pop-ups. I think I had my first one in like late May of 2021. The pop-ups.

[00:18:53] We could do more volume for more items. I would figure out how much I would need to sell. And then we would back out the hours of baking. How many hours could we bake?

[00:19:05] and I really hacked my oven. I measured my oven found, you know, generic racks for my oven. So I purchased two more of those. I bought a baking steel. I just really figured out how, what was the maximum amount that I could produce.

[00:19:20] About halfway through the year, I switched to doing pan loaves versus the boules and batards because it just didn't become financially viable. It wasn't, as much as I loved them, it didn't make financial sense for me to be only being able to bake four loaves per hour. At that point, I needed to be charging if I was going to consider paying myself, which my biggest intent for my business in my first year was to breakeven. Um, I get this question often on Instagram. People are like, how did you get started? I will say that I worked for a really long time before I started my business. And so I had one been making good income my husband and I had personal savings and that was what we initially invested in our business. I also did as much as possible, like it, I would literally push myself and figure out how much I could make with the equipment that I already had before I had to buy another piece of equipment. Oftentimes, you know, we would realize that there was the opportunity to make another. We could bake six focaccia at once in my home oven.

[00:20:22] So that meant I had to buy new pans. So then we would, you know, look at what that investment was, how many hours we would have to spend baking. and then we would kind of, you know, it was a lot of, we called it bread math. We were constantly doing bread math. How much more could we make in the home of when we had, with the hours that we had in the day?

[00:20:37] And, we would just do that constantly. And we would try things and see if they worked sometimes they did and sometimes they didn't. You know, it did feel like. shooting at a moving target constantly with working with your home oven because it's not a piece of professional equipment.

[00:20:52] But we really looked at it as a business, like it wasn't going to be an expensive hobby and. My goal was to break even the first year or have some type of small profit, and we were able to do that. Fortunately,

[00:21:05] **David Crabill:** So I know you were trying to get these commercial ovens, and you had big delays on that. Did you ever consider just buying a, used another home oven, like adding multiple ovens to your kitchen?

[00:21:19] **Chelsa Smith:** That's a great question. So I bought Tom Chandley Pico plus ovens. They were a pretty significant investment and. They were supposed to come in August of 2021. I first bought a Rofco, which is a very common bread oven in the baking world. I ordered that in I think March of 2021, even before I knew, like, I was like, well, this is a big investment.

[00:21:41] I think this business will work out. That had about a six month delay. The Rofco kept getting delayed. So I ordered the Tom Chandley ovens what I liked about those ovens is that I could buy one or two at a time and add up to a third. So there's technically three different ovens, but they stack on top of each other and they fit a full sheet pan in them, and they're made to be bread ovens.

[00:22:00] But you can also, do cookies and buns and other things in them. They were supposed to come in August, then they were supposed to come in September. Then they were supposed to come in October, and then they finally didn't come until December. I would've really had to like rework my entire kitchen to make.

[00:22:16] Another home oven work. I honestly, since I had those ordered, I'd already made the upfront investment.

[00:22:22] So I think we talked about it at one point, but knowing that the micro bakery ovens were coming, I think I just held out hope that once they got here we would, you know, have a solve. But that Christmas, knowing that they were supposed to be there for the Christmas bake of 2021 and just the push that December is it was hard.

[00:22:41] I don't wish to repeat. Like the Christmas bake of 2021. like it was at the point where, if they had been delayed anymore, I think I would've just had to take a break from baking and with the volume we were doing, it really just didn't make sense anymore to be baking out of my home oven.

[00:22:56] **David Crabill:** So it sounds like there was just like unlimited demand, right? Like it doesn't seem like you had any trouble like actually getting customers.

[00:23:03] **Chelsa Smith:** You know, I thank you for saying that. It's incredibly generous. I don't know, I am incredibly fortunate to have such a supportive community for people to continue to show up week after week.

[00:23:13] Like, you know, it sounds silly, but I'm always surprised, like every week when I drop off bread at my wholesale partners, the fact that it sells out, say it sells out most weeks. We do about 200 loaves right now per week between three locations. I just am continually like in awe, anytime I sell a, a popup, like that's the goal of anyone in any small business, right?

[00:23:33] That you bake enough, that you sell out of everything. I'm just really fortunate and I feel really grateful that people want to eat bread and sourdough baked goods so much.

[00:23:43] **David Crabill:** Well, I saw on your frequently asked questions page on your website a frequently asked question is I can never get bread from you. Like you're always sold out at stores. There's long lines at the markets and I can never get into the pre-orders online.

[00:23:59] Is that actually like a common problem that people have?

[00:24:03] **Chelsa Smith:** I would somewhat, yes. I mean, we've always tried to scale to the demand that we have. so up until about a month ago, I was baking a little over 300 loaves a week and baking for four 12 hour days. And, you know, I probably could have continued to produce more bread. I actually have had to make the decision to scale back my business slightly because is also my home.

[00:24:26] I'm also a mother and I'm also a partner. And I just found that baking, you know, four 12 hour days, I was really, wasn't able to do anything else and I was so tired on my days off. So we've made that a, the conscious decision for right now to stick with the amount that we're doing and try to build kind of a, you know, sustainable life that will allow us to continue to bake.

[00:24:46] And I say us, me you know, to continue to run this bakery out of our home and continue to try and meet the demand, but also in a way that allows us to be able to do other things besides bake all the time. But yes, we have been very fortunate to have such, so much demand.

[00:25:03] **David Crabill:** I saw someone wrote that you have had, I don't think, I don't know if you do as many popups now, but you've had like block long lines at popups. Like, it sounds like, like crazy.

[00:25:18] **Chelsa Smith:** Yeah. So yes, we, I've, I've had a tremendous amount of success. I've, I'm very fortunate, you know, Des Moines is a very special place. I would say that the community here is incredibly supportive of small businesses, incredibly supportive of food establishments. I think there is just this real passion and desire here to see people succeed and to, support small business.

[00:25:40] So I feel really fortunate to be a part of that. And, it is a funny thing to say yes to I don't know if I quite even know how to receive it still after the last couple of years. But yes, I've been fortunate enough to have long lines that are popups and to continue to sell out week after week.

[00:25:57] It's a, beautiful problem to have.

[00:25:58] you know, even with having as much commercial equipment as I have in my house, I have three bread ovens at the three different Tom Chandley ovens at this point, which allows me to do, I'm now back to doing boules and batards.

[00:26:11] I can do about 18 of those per hour. I can do a full sheet pan of focaccia. I don't usually bake on full sheet pans. I usually bake on half sheet or quarter sheet pans, but I can bake. 4, 6 half sheet pans, three full sheet pans, nine quarter sheet pans an hour. And on those I do use my home oven still to bake some focaccia, but I only bake rather than bake six at a time, which is kind of a gamble and a scramble.

[00:26:34] I just do about four because they bake much more evenly because. I think the thing I found that was so hard with baking out of my home oven is that there really is like a bell curve with it. There's like, everything bakes really well and really evenly up to a point, but then you pack more and more things in it and you know, it's not meant to be a commercial oven.

[00:26:50] So, after you shove six pans in there, you know, you're opening it every 10 minutes, which is letting the heat out. You're opening it to shuffle around pans so that things bake evenly. And that's yeah, that can be challenging. So yeah, and that's, what I bake out of now. I have a commercial fridge in my basement.

[00:27:07] I also have a prep fridge and a deep freeze now. I don't use my home fridge anymore for bread. It just gets open too often and things over proof. We have different half uh, speed racks. I have a full speed rack, I've got a whole shaping table, all sorts of other things, fun things now. So like a fully operational kitchen.

[00:27:29] Still do my dishes in my home sink and my, and do all my dishes in my dishwasher. So it's a long day, long, couple hours after you bake. I mean, on average we bake 50 quarter sheet pans of focaccia. Now on an average Thursday, there's a lot of, dishes to do.

[00:27:45] **David Crabill:** And I, I see you have employees now.

[00:27:49] **Chelsa Smith:** Yeah, I have two part-time employees. They're both contractors. We're actually going to take on like our full official, official, I mean, they're both official employees, but I'm hiring another employee right now. One of my employees will be leaving to have her, her baby, another baby at the end of May.

[00:28:05] So I need to fulfill that role. I can bake about 75 loaves of bread really well by myself. I'm sure other people can do more than that. I feel like for me, just with all the other things that come with running a small business and all the other things that come with a day, it might, kids are five and eight, they're still in the house like at least half the day when I'm baking.

[00:28:26] And I still, it is my home. You know, there's lots of other things going on. So 75 seems to be about like the sweet spot for me. I can do more than that and have done more than that on my own, but, just a little bit of a bell curve once I hit that 75. Just with the packaging that has to get taken place too, and getting the orders out the door and, you know, if we do kind of those pre-order orders.

[00:28:45] So I took on an employee, one employee last year for the first time, and then brought another employee on in the fall. And then we'll be hiring our third employee here shortly. I've been so fortunate to have people interested in baking with me you know, and to kind of grown this little bakery.

[00:28:59] My, my husband does help. he is very helpful. I would say He's does 60% of the dishes. He worked in a bakery in college and I feel like maybe he manifested this and I just became the baker unknowingly. He likes baked goods more than anyone I know. I don't think he has quite the obsession with bread that I do, but he helps a lot as well. He helps with packaging and he works at

markets. If I do popups now, he's usually my partner in that. So he's taken on a much bigger role uh, within the last, I mean, it ebbs and flows.

[00:29:27] He has a full-time job too, and he works shift work. And so I really have to balance the bakery schedule around, our home life and also his work schedule.

[00:29:36] **David Crabill:** You said your kids are now five and eight. So when you started this business, I guess they would've been like, the youngest would've been three, like it sounds like definitely a busy time to be starting a business.

[00:29:49] **Chelsa Smith:** Yeah, I mean, I think given the fact that it was the pandemic and we weren't going anywhere, we were just here all the time. And, you know, we certainly weren't doing the volume that we're doing now. So I think as they've grown gone older, we've been able to take on more work.

[00:30:04] I've been really fortunate to have my son, I think he was in kindergarten when we started the business. My daughter was in preschool, so they both were going to school during the day. You know, and last year when we scaled up the business in the fall, I did have a part-time nanny to help us.

[00:30:21] it's a balancing act and I've been really fortunate to be able to have so much help, one in the kitchen and two with childcare. You know, with my husband's shift work, I do take on quite a bit of, what goes on in our household on top of the business, and I just need an extra set of hands.

[00:30:38] And it's why we felt comfortable, you know, having a nanny to allow us to be able to, I don't know, do it all. my family's all from Idaho. They don't live here in Iowa, so, you know, I can't rely on them to help even though they do when they come. My parents will tell you they're, every time that they've visited, I put everyone to work my in-laws as well, my sister-in-law.

[00:30:59] I think at this point, nearly everybody in my family has either worked a pop-up with me or help me prep for some massive holiday. So, we've had a lot of help and I think that's really helped, you know, the business to be successful. I had tried really hard to do it all on my own the first year, and by the end of it I felt like I was drowning and I didn't necessarily think it had to be quite that hard.

[00:31:20] I think one of my superpowers, I think anybody who owns a small business has to have superpowers. But one of mine is, I'm, I'm really not afraid

to ask for help and I, I don't think that I can do it all myself. And so I just have continued to ask for help, whether it be in the kitchen or with childcare as my entrepreneurial journey has gone on.

[00:31:37] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like you've been able to achieve work life balance or do you feel like it's just been a constant struggle?

[00:31:47] **Chelsa Smith:** I think balance is a funny word and I think that, when you're a small business owner, you make certain sacrifices and you just know that upfront, but you have to want it bad enough. To be able to do those things. Like I have given up a lot of weekends, a lot of social activities because I wanted the business to be successful, but I didn't regret any of those.

[00:32:07] I don't wish that I had been there. I wanted the business to thrive enough and I knew the sacrifices that I had to make in order to do those things. I think that, you know, there's always something winning out. you know, and I think it shifts seasonally. My husband and I have done a good job from the beginning, really trying to set healthy boundaries around this kind of, his shift work and his big job and.

[00:32:30] The bakery and the kids and we are constantly in communication over what is and isn't working. He's incredibly hands on at home. Right now I am exhausted at the end of the day after baking since 4:00 AM and so my husband does most of the meal prep around the house. I will find the recipes, he'll make the meals so that we do kind of have that balance.

[00:32:53] He is probably the person who does the most of the laundry. I manage the schedule, so there really is an ebb and flow between us in order to make our home life work with the business life. But I think we're doing okay. We just call it beautiful chaos at this point, and I think rather than strive for perfection, which is what we were doing early on, we really just try to lean into the chaos a little bit.

[00:33:16] And know that we really also have tried to define like what good enough looks like for us. You know, certainly other people might think the way that we're living our life is silly and out of sorts. My house isn't always perfect. I run a bakery out of my kitchen, so maybe we don't have people over as often. Or if they do come over, there might be flour in crazy places, But I think we've gotten really clear on what our values are and what's important to us.

[00:33:43] And I think both of us pinch ourselves that we get to run this bakery out of our home and we get to bake bread for every, everyone, every week.



That, this thing that we could never have imagined has become such a big part of our lives. And I think just the constant communication, the constant, values, conversation, talking about the hard stuff like this feels challenging or this week was really hard, or I don't think that that's going to work.

[00:34:06] It's really helped us to get clear on what we will and won't do. You know, it means we've said no to things that we really thought we wanted to do, and it means that we've said yes to things that, like cutting back on baking was a really hard, challenging decision, especially after working to scale the business so much.

[00:34:23] And you know, but we realized that that life wasn't functioning the way that we wanted it to. And that we both felt very tired at the end of the week and didn't really have very much left for anyone or each other. And so, You know, we recalibrated and I think there might be a season again. I imagine that there will be knowing myself where we are baking just as much, but right now, like this is, okay.

[00:34:43] So that's our balance. I think it, literally can change weekly with our lives and that's okay.

[00:34:50] **David Crabill:** Why do you think the bakery has been so successful? Do you think it's just the products themselves? Is it like how connected of a person you are? Is it you know, word of mouth? Is it The marketing avenues that you pursue? Like what has driven this business forward so quickly?

[00:35:09] **Chelsa Smith:** I'm, I'm not quite sure to be honest with you. I'm sure it's the combination of things that you've just said. I mean, I think people really like good bread and at the end of the day, I'm very clear that regardless of what happens if I end up opening a brick and mortar bakery, if I scale back on bread, if I end up just teaching classes, like my goal is to get people good.

[00:35:28] And I think staying clear on that and that means right now in the season we, we bake three different types of akasha and two different types of sourdough a week. It doesn't mean we have a massive menu, you know, it doesn't mean we're doing all these different crazy things. It means we're really sticking to what we do well because I know that those things are good.

[00:35:46] and it's a hard question for me to answer because I have a hard time sometimes it's similar to when you ask me why I have these lines or keep selling out. I don't know what it is. But um, yeah, I think it's a combination of a lot of

stuff. I also have always wanted, My goal is to be successful. My goal is to help provide for my family financially. My goal is to run a successful business. And so we're going to do the things to make sure that we're successful. And success for me might look different than success for you.

[00:36:14] But I am pretty determined. And I I'm a pretty good problem solver. So I guess I'm going to figure out what it takes to get there.

[00:36:22] **David Crabill:** Was there something that you did in the early days that you felt worked really well towards pushing your business forward?

[00:36:30] **Chelsa Smith:** I think building community, I'm a natural networker. community is so important to me. I continue to do it in my business. I really get a lot of joy. Like the thing that keeps me inspired is connecting with other people. So I think that is a. Big part of it. The collaboration amongst bakers here in Des Moines has also been huge.

[00:36:50] Like partnering with Kristen of Pie Bird Pies.

[00:36:53] she also owns a home bakery. And so the two of us initially partnered early on to do a donut pop-up together. They made the fillings for the donuts. I've always been clear that I want to do cool stuff with cool people and you know, I've really sought out. I f someone's doing something cool that I think is cool, I'm going to be like, Hey, can we work together?

[00:37:10] Like, how do we collaborate?

[00:37:12] And I think that's been, that community aspect of it has been really helpful. I run this thing called Micro Bakery Mondays. On Instagram where anyone can ask me questions about baking. And oftentimes people are like, how did you get customers? How did you, launch your bakery? How did you get the word out?

[00:37:27] And

[00:37:28] I find that most food, food entrepreneurs like, they don't, they, they're waiting for someone else to tell, like give them a break. Like they're waiting for other people to say, Hey, I want to interview you. you know, I've been really, really fortunate to have a lot of, I guess, media for my business.

[00:37:45] Some of it I've asked for though. My connections help. The fact that I'm like a natural networker. The fact that I like, like to introduce people. But I

do tell people all the time, I'm like, you want to be in the local newspaper? You just have to like, send them, like, they might not use it now.

[00:38:01] Like, you're not in any worse position than you were when you started. If you send them like a little bio about yourself and something cool you're doing, like if anything, you're on their radar now. So if they can't cover you right now, hopefully they do it later. I just don't think people realize that, that they can just do that,

[00:38:17] I think another aspect of it is I had a newsletter right away and that was like a direct line to my customers, you know, if you want to purchase from me, like you're going to sign up for my newsletter. So, having that and sending it weekly or sending it when I had pre-orders, giving people updates, that's been a huge part of it.

[00:38:36] I think newsletters are super important. You know, and I've always just, again, good bread has been the goal from the beginning, so focusing on making sure that, I don't have to have 50 products, but if I'm giving you one really great product then we're you know, we're succeeding in what our values are for this business.

[00:38:53] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I mean, just from looking at your pictures and looking at what some of the people are saying, like it seems like your products. Really excellent, and I haven't really seen many bread bakers focusing so much on focaccia and then sourdough donuts. I mean, it definitely seems like you are offering something unique that like even if Des Moines had a lot of artisan bread bakers, you would still, be differentiated from the rest of them.

[00:39:22] **Chelsa Smith:** That's very kind of you to say. I, I don't know. It wasn't why I started baking, but it feels like this, like beautiful gift that, The, the recipe and I get along really well. And you know, my sourdough starter lends itself really well to focaccia the flours I use it turns out really beautiful, and it's been so fun to be able to play with seasonal ingredients in the focaccia.

[00:39:42] So I think that that's one of the ways, you know, early on I was getting vegetables from one of the farmers here in town, and so we were adding those to focaccia more than anything. They feel like they can change flavor seasonally. I mean, focaccia is delicious. So, I know you've obviously seen a lot of success, but I also saw you wrote somewhere that it's been like a roller coaster ride with the highest of highs and some pretty low lows. So what are some of those struggles that you've faced as you've grown this business?

[00:40:16] You know, I think that I'm naturally a perfectionist I think a lot of people in the food industry are I hold myself to a pretty high standard which means that I put a lot of pressure on myself to perform and, I think that pressure can be a lot. And there are times I think that it has made me question whether or not, it's worthwhile to continue. But I've learned a lot, kind of letting go. I call myself a recovering perfectionist now, letting go of some of those perfectionist tendencies. Figuring out what my good enough is.

[00:40:47] I think when you have a business that's inside of your home, you sacrifice a lot. But I mean, we chose to make those sacrifices don't have the balance down perfectly between life and the bakery. And being an ambition person naturally. I can let the lines get blurred you know, and then get a little bit of whiplash and kind of have to recalibrate back.

[00:41:08] I mean, specifically, like last year, I fell down the stairs carrying bread downstairs on the week where I had I had to teach a class and I also had bread orders and I had a big popup coming up. And having to, you know, it was really scary. I, I hold if I tell someone I'm going to do something, I'm, I'm going to do it.

[00:41:27] you know, my word means a lot to me. Having to step away, step back and say, Hey, I'm one both physically injured and I, can't actually do these things. Knowing that I couldn't show up, like that was, that was very challenging. It was a really good lesson. I think anytime I've faced these low lows, I tend to be like a glass is half full person and be like, what do I learn out of this?

[00:41:48] Like, what is this meant to be? What lesson am I meant to learn here? what's the takeaway from this? I think I'm, constantly evaluating our points of failure in the business in order to figure out how we can improve and do better. Yeah, I think being a business owner is a wild ride.

[00:42:03] Running a business out of your home is a wild ride. Owning a bakery is a wild ride. I'm so grateful for all of it and what it's taught me, but yeah, it's, I mean, these are just real challenges that come with being human and owning a business. So you know, and I also, I want to make the best bread for everyone.

[00:42:18] And if I don't feel like I deliver on that that can be really challenging.

[00:42:21] **David Crabill:** Well, as I was reading through your Instagram feed, there's something that really jumped out at me and I've seen a lot of business

owners, they're always trying to promote themselves. They're always trying to push their products, but what struck me was like, for you was like the opposite, right?

[00:42:38] Like there's so much humility that comes through your posts and just gratitude, and it's like, seems like it's just like this is something that more like happened to you instead of something you tried to do. Like, that's how I'd summarize the feeling. How would you.

[00:42:56] **Chelsa Smith:** I think that's pretty accurate. Tara Jensen, she wrote a book called Flour Power, and I remember reading in one of her posts, she's also an incredible writer. She said, I don't know if bread found me or I found bread. But at this point in the journey, it doesn't really matter.

[00:43:11] And I sort of feel that way. Like if you had told me in 2017 that I would be running a bakery out of my house, I probably would believe you a little bit just knowing myself and my love for bread. But I also, I would've been shocked, like I never had an intention to be an entrepreneur, to own a bakery.

[00:43:30] And, I think it feels like a wild, beautiful journey. And I honestly, like everything that I did up until opening the bakery prepared me for this moment. And I used to try to explain it. I don't really anymore. I just feel so grateful that I listen to my intuition and that I continue to just pursue the things that really like lit a fire in my belly.

[00:43:51] And I certainly created some of these opportunities for myself. Like, I know I'm ambitious. I know that if I want something, I'm going to go figure out a way to get there. So, you know, when I have a dream come up, or if I have kind of an inkling that I might want to do something, I'm going to go figure out how to get there.

[00:44:08] Like, I taught myself how to make sourdough with cookbooks and the internet. So yeah, I'm pretty scrappy, I guess. So It's, wild. Like I honestly, I lack the word sometimes to describe all the things that have happened and how we find ourselves here, but I mean, it's pretty dang cool.

[00:44:24] **David Crabill:** So considering like having this thriving bakery in your home is obviously putting pressure on your home kitchen. So have you like explored moving this beyond your home kitchen at some point?

[00:44:37] **Chelsa Smith:** Yeah, we, you know, we did I last summer, Gosh, even after the first year, people were like, when are you going to have a real

bakery? Which I think is a very funny thing to say, because even though my bakery is my house, it is a hundred percent a real bakery.

[00:44:51] And I struggle with the word home baker because I don't think it's the right word for what I'm doing. It's one of the reasons I call myself a micro bakery because one, people get really confused on what a cottage bakery is. I've had so many people be like, so you live in a cottage?

[00:45:08] Like, no. Or they're like, you mean like cottage core? and like, no. So micro bakery I think lends itself better to the type of bakery that we are. And someone came to me and they said, you know, cool, when are you going to open a real bakery?

[00:45:22] And I was like, okay, well, if I were to open a home bakery, a bakery that's not in my home, what does that look like? And I think I wrote down like five things needed to be close to my kids' school, close to my current home. The rent needed to be affordable, the space needed to be this big. I didn't want you know, an industrial space.

[00:45:40] I wanted something that was more intimate, you know, that took what I've created in my home and sort of like took that into an actual space. And so I wrote these things down and then I shut the book, or I put them in my wallet. I don't remember which one. And then last year it was after my kid's soccer game.

[00:45:55] And I was at this like a soccer party and I was talking with a friend and they mentioned this space They were like, Hey, that business isn't going in anymore. I think it would make a great place for the bakery. And I was like, oh gosh, that's crazy. And I had recently walked by this space a couple times.

[00:46:09] It was just in a neighborhood that's not very far from mine, it's incredibly walkable neighborhood. I'd walked by it and said, wow, that space, wouldn't it make a great bakery? Fast forward, I'm at this soccer party. Someone says I know the guy that's the developer.

[00:46:21] Do you want me to put you in touch with him? And I was like, yeah, why not? Let's see. And then turns out I knew the developer. He was like a friend of a friend. I sent him a DM and said, Hey, I don't know if that space is available or if you have another space. I'm not really looking right now, but if you ever have a space that comes up, let me know.

[00:46:40] I'm not in any hurry, and like he, I think he DMed me like an hour later and was like, Hey, what are you doing on Thursday? Do you want to come look at this space?

[00:46:48] And at that point I wasn't even sure what space we were looking at. So I show up at this meeting, I drive up to the building, it's the building I've been walking past a couple times and like he's like, I have this space available to you. Told me the rent price, which was like super affordable and like we were off to the races.

[00:47:05] And so from basically like that time in May until the end of August, you know, I called my friend Kristen from Pie Bird's Pies. They run an in-home pie bakery here in Des Moines. And we had always talked about collaborating on a kitchen space. I immediately called her that night and said, I don't even know what I'm saying to you on the phone right now, Kristen, but I'm just going to say it all out loud and then we can go back from there.

[00:47:26] And by the end of the conversation, both of us were like, okay, like what is it going to take to make this happen? So we met right away with a small business administration. We met with a bunch of different loan officers. We started a business plan. We met with like a lawyer. We got our business, like everything drafted, and that's what we did for months.

[00:47:46] And then unfortunately, by the end of August, we found out that the developer decided to move in a different direction. And it was a pretty big disappointment after working so hard on it. I will say now, looking back, that I think things happen for a reason. potentially we are continuing to look for spaces.

[00:48:04] We have meetings often. We have plans to still eventually build. Whether it be a ghost kitchen or a, brick and mortar bakery, I think we would both love to share kitchen space together and eventually be, you know, have space outside of our homes. But right now, I think we're both continuing to enjoy the beautiful chaos of running a bakery out of our homes.

[00:48:26] And I mean, if anything is going to teach me lessons, it's having a bakery in my house.

[00:48:32] **David Crabill:** And I saw that you actually like won a competition last year, right?

[00:48:37] **Chelsa Smith:** Yeah. We got to do a pitch competition and the community rallied around us and we were so fortunate and we we won \$3,000 for our space. And you know, I've tucked that away until the right thing comes. I feel so fortunate that while Kristen and I don't have a kitchen that we share right now, that she continues to be my business partner.

[00:48:59] And, you know, this can be a very interesting space to be in. Like, While it's very common, it's also very unique to run a food business out of your house. And I'm so fortunate to be surrounded by so many people in the community that do that.

[00:49:13] I'm really, really lucky to have Kristen. to talk through business decisions with, to share in frustrations to share in You know, wins to continue to collaborate in the kitchen with the ball.

[00:49:25] We don't bake together very regularly. I feel very fortunate to have her as a business partner for our business that doesn't have a bakery right now. So,

[00:49:33] **David Crabill:** So what does your business look like today? I know you don't do as many pre-orders or popups, right? I mean, what does your week to week look like now?

[00:49:43] **Chelsa Smith:** yeah, so the business changes a little bit seasonally. So right now the business looks like I bake Monday through Thursday still, but Monday and Tuesday are primarily admin days or meeting days.

[00:49:55] I mix on Monday and then I bake on Tuesday and bake a small amount of bread for a local restaurant. Called the Cheese Bar. I'm so honored to be in on their menu. And So Wednesday I mix for all the sourdough that we will bake Thursday and Friday morning.

[00:50:11] So right now we're doing about two, a little bit over 200 loaves a week between the three wholesale, three to four wholesale partners that we have. I sell at two meat markets here in Des Moines. And I sell at another bakery here in Des Moines that doesn't have artisan breads available. They do primarily milk breads and cupcakes and cakes.

[00:50:30] And they do a lot of collaborations with other small businesses in the community. And they're called Creme Bakery in Des Moines. They've made that a big part of their focus, I've been super fortunate to be able to partner with them.



[00:50:40] So Wednesday, we mix Thursday we start baking. And then Friday morning we finish baking and then we deliver all the breads to all of our wholesale locations. And so that's what it looks like week to week right now. I do pre-orders for holidays.

[00:50:55] So we've got Easter coming up. I'll do hot cross buns for those. I started doing those when I first launched the business because. To be honest, I'm really just not that good at rolling out cinnamon rolls. So I wanted to do something that was different and that nobody else was doing.

[00:51:10] So I started baking hot cross buns. So we do pre-orders for those for Easter and we also do take and bake rolls So it's about 50 orders, 300 take and bake rolls. We do 250 hot cross buns.

[00:51:24] I think we'll bake like 52 focaccia. And then, yeah, it's about the same amount of sourdough. It'll be a long bake day. And that will do, we'll do pickup for that the day before Easter going into the summer. We'll kind of switch the menu up. I think we'll do some take and bake pizza.

[00:51:39] I might start baking some burger buns. I haven't decided if I want to do it. I also need to run the numbers. I did costing in a previous life, so I, I am very in tune with like what my margins are on bread. And I try to be really conscious of, especially with the rising food costs, like milk and eggs and butter are so expensive.

[00:52:00] And right now I don't use those weekly. We use a lot of other ingredients. So maybe I'll do buns for summer. I haven't done them before, but we might take on another wholesale client. I've been really fortunate to be a my very first wholesale partner was a place called Dog Patch Urban Farms, and.

[00:52:16] Urban farm here in in Des Moines. They have a farm stand that they have open Wednesdays and Saturdays, usually April through December. they've invited me to come back this year. And I would like to figure out how I can do that. I partner with a lot of farm to table chefs in town.

[00:52:31] I do some special orders. We do have a minimum of the amount of bread that you can, like, do a special order for. I teach as well, teach probably six or seven classes a year. Sourdough, my husband and I teach a sourdough pizza class together. it's not like a fancy pizza class, it's just like how to make really good sourdough pizza for your home, for your family.

[00:52:53] It's a class that we teach together. I teach at a farmstead here in Iowa called Rose Farm. They're in Norwalk, Iowa. I teach my sourdough 1 0 1 class there and then do our pizza class. I need to figure out what my other summer classes are going to be, and then I'd like to do a donut popup or two.

[00:53:11] We'll see. we do not have a part-time nanny right now. We have some childcare. And that has been a big factor in the amount of volume that we're, that we can handle. or I can handle, the business can handle.

[00:53:22] So we'll see. I feel like the moment I slow down is the moment I get excited about something and then I think I can take on more. So things ebb and flow seasonally. And I really try to. Just listen to those things. Listen to the way that the business feels like it's shifting.

[00:53:39] you know, consumer behavior is shifting a little bit from the way that it was during the pandemic. And I'm trying to be really as responsive as I can to that. I see that, people have gotten used to doing these pre-orders and pickups but things are changing.

[00:53:52] And so, I think popups are still really popular. But I think there's a lot of popups happening. And while they can be really fun and cool, I'm always like, what's the next thing that's going to drive business? Like, what's the next cool, fun thing that we can do? What can we try out? Like what hasn't been done before?

[00:54:09] What, do we, how do we shift this?

[00:54:11] I'm not sure what that looks like right now, but I'm just conscious of you know, that it could change and shift and I'm just trying to pay attention to the marketplace and seeing what's going on.

[00:54:20] Farmer's markets don't work for my schedule at this point. So yeah, we just ebb and flow with the seasons and kind of what consumer behavior dictates.

[00:54:30] **David Crabill:** So, as you look ahead, what are your goals for the business? Like maybe short term goals and long term goals? Like where do you want to take this?

[00:54:41] **Chelsa Smith:** as far as goals go, I think I'm continually striving towards balance, whatever that looks like. The new world that I'm actually using more than balance is sustainability.

[00:54:51] I want to be baking in 10 years in some capacity. Baking is an incredibly, especially running your own bakery, there's, it's a lot of mental and physical bandwidth that it requires. And I need to figure out what does that sustainability look like for me? How do I build a sustainable lifestyle for my family?

[00:55:12] So I think continuing to evaluate like what sustainability is. Just doing fun stuff, baking good bread for people. I've kind of found myself in this niche all of a sudden. And I know you've interviewed other people, but Doing a lot of coaching these days for other small business owners.

[00:55:27] You know, maybe leaning into that a little bit. I love connecting with people. I love getting on the phone and feeling, hearing about how people are building their businesses. I love strategizing with them. I like helping them with operations and, figuring out what this bread math problem is.

[00:55:43] So perhaps that I wish I had a more specific answer for you. I think that eventually that they'll come a time where the, it makes sense for the bakery to move out of my home. I don't know when that will be. I really just am listening to myself and the business to figure out, when we make that jump, it's a big, big jump from running a home-based business to having any type of like space that isn't outside of your home.

[00:56:10] It's a big decision. It's a big financial decision as well. So yeah, really just being like conscious of that. Yeah, I'm honestly sort of just excited to see what comes my way. I can't tell you how many surprises that I could never have dreamed up, have just shown up in my lap. Got lots of aspirations to continue to learn how to bake new things, get more involved in local grain economy.

[00:56:34] I don't know, I got all sorts of big dreams.

[00:56:36] want to travel some more, learn from different people. Yeah, bring back what I learned to Des Moines and keep feeding people. Good.

[00:56:44] **David Crabill:** Well, I know that at one point, or maybe at many points you thought about stopping the business. So what do you think it is that drives you to keep moving forward with it?

[00:56:56] **Chelsa Smith:** I think about stopping and then, you know, I take a break two weeks, and then I just find myself back in the kitchen. Like I said, early on in the conversation, I tend to be a maximalist. So now that I have the

skill that I can make 60 loaves of bread in a day, how could I find myself just making one?

[00:57:13] So, I just love handing people a loaf of bread or dropping off the bread or seeing people buy it. getting texts from people saying like, man, it was a rough week, but like, I'm, here's a picture of me eating toast or seeing what people use or create their bread with, I mean like it is a very cool and special thing that bread is like bread of life break bread, like how many different associations are there with bread and if I can bake for people and still have the skillset to do it and you know, can continue to feed them and feed them good bread made with good ingredients, I think I will probably do it for, I mean, even if I take breaks for as long as I can,

[00:57:55] there's just this fire in my belly to just keep feeding people good food. And I think I will just do it until something else sparks my interest.

[00:58:02] Someone asked me last year, if you weren't a bread baker, what would you do? And without thinking, I was like, well, I would become a yogurt maker. And I don't know why, but I, again, with fermentation and cultures and I'm like, man, yogurt's really great and fascinating and I don't, I think I'll work in food for a long time.

[00:58:19] I don't actually think that there's another industry that I have any interest in moving into at this point. That whatever I can do to connect people to good food, I think that's where I'll find myself.

[00:58:27] **David Crabill:** Well, it's fascinating to see how far you've come and definitely looking forward to seeing where you're going to go in the future. Now, if somebody does want to learn more about you, where can they find you or how can they reach out?

[00:58:42] **Chelsa Smith:** Yeah, my website is the best place. I've always am updating it constantly. There's tons of information on there. My email is on there and I'm very active on Instagram. That's the primary social media platform, or really the only social media platform that I use. So it's breadbychelsab.com and @breadbychelsab on Instagram. So that's where you can find me.

[00:59:03] **David Crabill:** Awesome. Well, thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us.

[00:59:08] **Chelsa Smith:** Thank you, David. It's been an honor.

[00:59:11] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager Podcast.

[00:59:15] For more information about this episode, go to [forrager.com/podcast/88](https://forrager.com/podcast/88).

[00:59:22] And if you're enjoying this podcast, please take a quick moment right now and leave me a review on Apple Podcasts. It doesn't have to be a long review, but it's truly the best way to support this show, and we'll help others like you find this podcast.

[00:59:34] 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](https://cottagefoodcourse.com).

[00:59:46] Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.