

Bless Yourself By Blessing Others with Barbara Williford

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 Barbara Williford. 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 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 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 for most cottage food businesses, and it's even better than any of the paid services out there. So if you wanna learn more, you can watch my free tutorial by going to forrager.com/website.

[00:00:59] All right, so I have Barbara Williford on the show today. Barbara lives in DeBerry, Texas and sells custom cakes and cookies and other baked goods with her cottage food business Royalty Sweet Shoppe. Barbara's business journey started quite by accident in 2010 when she and her daughter took a decorating class together, and they immediately got hooked.

[00:01:23] As they made more cakes and improved their skills, they started taking orders and built this business together. Barbara's daughter helped with the bakery through high school and through college, and eventually grew to the point where Barbara was basically working two full-time jobs.

[00:01:39] So she finally left her teaching career to pursue the bakery full-time. In this episode, you'll hear how Barbara's focused on supporting her family, networking with others, and giving back to her community led her to create a business that she truly loves. And with that, let's jump right into this episode.

[00:01:59] Welcome to the show, Barbara. Nice to have you here.

[00:02:04] **Barbara Williford:** Thank you, David for having me.

[00:02:06] **David Crabill:** Barbara, can you take us back to the beginning like how did this journey get started for you?

[00:02:12] **Barbara Williford:** Well back in 2010, my daughter and I decided to take some cake decorating classes at our local craft store. It was just a fun way for us to fill our Saturdays and to spend some time together. And after the classes we started to make cakes together as gifts for our family, for our friends, for their celebration, and to just kind of continue our time together, doing stuff together in the kitchen.

[00:02:45] And so our business just kind of organically grew from that. People started asking us to make cakes. We started trying to figure out this, this cake business as we went along the way. She now left me. She moved 600 miles away. So now I'm running the business solo, praying that she moves back to help me.

[00:03:09] And she kind of continues to the tradition of making some cakes and sweets for her local family and friends where she's at.

[00:03:18] **David Crabill:** So, how old was she when you started this?

[00:03:21] **Barbara Williford:** She was probably nine or 10 when we started this. She's a natural. maybe she was a little bit older, but she was a natural, she picked up on it quick and I didn't realize how much I depended on her until she left me.

[00:03:35] **David Crabill:** what year was this that you got started?

[00:03:38] **Barbara Williford:** 2010 is when we took our first class.

[00:03:42] **David Crabill:** Yeah, so I, I noticed that the name is kind of based on your connection right?

[00:03:50] **Barbara Williford:** it is she is the only girl out of four children. She's got three brothers, so we always called her the princess and I just had to always keep reminding her that I was the queen. And so we just decided to run with that and call our business royalty. Sweet.

[00:04:10] **David Crabill:** So you started this with her after taking decorating class, and it sounds like it grew very organically, but was there any prior interest from you to like have a business to start a business?

[00:04:22] **Barbara Williford:** There was absolutely none whatsoever. Like we were just gonna do this as mother daughter. We never dreamed it would be a business, much less a business that I could take full-time. You know, over time it was just, we had no business thoughts in her mind. When we took that first class.

[00:04:42] **David Crabill:** So what, where's your background? Like were you a stay at home mom? Were you working at that time?

[00:04:47] **Barbara Williford:** I just retired from teaching. I was a teacher for 20 years, so I was just high school teacher who this with my daughter, and it just grew into a business that eventually allowed me to retire and do this full-time.

[00:05:03] **David Crabill:** Wow. So I guess you just were doing this with her, all the way up through what sounds like middle school, high school, and then when did she leave the business, I assume when she went to college?

[00:05:17] **Barbara Williford:** Well, she did go to college. Um, But then she came back, but she got married four years ago and that's when she moved away. So she did it all the way through middle school, high school, college. When she comes in town, she'll still help me, you know, when she's here. she just kept doing it till she left me.

[00:05:35] We, the last order we did together was her wedding cake and her husband's groom cake.

[00:05:41] **David Crabill:** Wow. That must have been a, a pretty special cake to make.

[00:05:44] **Barbara Williford:** It was an emotional cake, but yeah, it was special to do that together.

[00:05:50] **David Crabill:** So can you take me through those first few years? I mean, it sounds like you were a teacher and like working, I presume, a full-time job so was this a very much like part-time thing at first?

[00:06:04] **Barbara Williford:** it did start out part-time. We just made cakes for family and friends. You know, if we had a family member that had a cake, we would try to make over the top cake for them. If we had friends we would try to, do cakes for them. and it just, started with us playing around and making these cakes.

[00:06:25] And then we had those friends, Hey, Can you make a cake for this? and so we, Hey, let's go ahead and, you know, make this uh, recoup a little money from it. I guess you could say it was like a hobby baker. we didn't know what we were doing,, you know, people started requesting things from us and we started baking it, and then it started moving to more cakes, you know, on the weekend, and it just grew from there.

[00:06:53] **David Crabill:** When did it start to feel like, wow, this is really turning into a significant business?

[00:06:58] **Barbara Williford:** Probably probably a couple of years in we started getting extremely busy on the weekends we started getting more cakes, so we probably had five or six cakes a weekend. And so that's when we started. To take it a little bit more seriously, that's when we, you know, tried to figure out, okay, we got to run this as a business.

[00:07:19] We gotta think of it as a business. We need to evaluate our costs. We need to think about, how to get our name out there. So after a couple of years, we really started getting serious about it and it did help our family financially during, you know, I would use the money for our kids in high school, you know, for their extracurricular activity.

[00:07:42] If we needed extra money financially for our, our, you know, home. It, it really helped out and started to grow into a business, I guess. Does that make sense?

[00:07:52] **David Crabill:** Yeah, it definitely makes sense.

[00:07:54] **Barbara Williford:** Yeah. It, it took us thinking about it as a business and trying to figure out how to run it as a business. Cause neither one of us expected this to happen.

[00:08:03] **David Crabill:** well, I have a couple young kids at home myself, and I would love for them to like run a business someday as they go through high school. But I've heard from, other entrepreneurs that have had kids that they've, you know, taught them entrepreneurship in high school.

[00:08:19] And one thing I've heard is that oftentimes it's like goes through phases, right? Like most kids will just spend a couple months or a few months on a project before wanting to explore something new. So did your daughter really like stick with this business for the whole time, like through high school and everything?

[00:08:39] Was she she really just focused on this one thing. She didn't get distracted.

[00:08:43] **Barbara Williford:** Well, it was a part-time business, so she, you know, helped me part-time. I didn't tie her to the business. She was young. she still had a life growing up. She still went with her friends and when I needed help she would come in and help. She's very artistic. Like I said, she picked up on this naturally, and if I needed help, she would come in and help.

[00:09:06] I guess I was the main one running the business and she was more helping me along the way, well. All of my kids picked up on. how to run a business, what you need to run a business the financial end all the ins and outs. So they, they were watching and learning. I don't know that they made a conscious effort to do that, but she did help me when I needed her too.

[00:09:30] As far as decorating and baking and things like that. And I ran the business part of it. I did share with her, you know, some things about costing and, you know our revenue and profits and, the background of the business. But her main focus in middle school and high school and some in college was just the creative aspect.

[00:09:52] And so I would bake and run the business end of it, and she would just swoop in and decorate it and, and have the fun part. to it, but I think she, she saw it and she now has an entrepreneur desire because she did mention to me actually just yesterday about a business she wants to start.

[00:10:12] And so I think, through the process, she's realized that's something, you know, I could have a business if my mom and I had a business, then I could have a business. So she's actually coming up with a business plan and she's gonna present it to some investors. and our bakery does have a role in it.

[00:10:30] It's not the main part of her business, but it does have a role in it. So I'm super excited to see where she goes from there.

[00:10:38] **David Crabill:** So I, I see that you're like right on the Louisiana and Texas border and that you sell both in Louisiana and Texas. Correct?

[00:10:49] **Barbara Williford:** I do.

[00:10:50] **David Crabill:** And I was just wondering is, was there any like legal issues with that in terms of like using one cottage food law and then like selling in the other state? Has that ever come up?

[00:11:03] **Barbara Williford:** Both states have cottage laws and both states do not allow product to cross over. So in Texas, you can't take product across the state line. And the same with Louisiana. I'm on the Texas side and across the street is Louisiana. So that tells you I'm really on the state line. And so what I've had to do is I have my primary home in Texas where I follow the Texas Cottage laws.

[00:11:34] I have the L L c, the insurance. And so I use my Texas home for my Texas customers. I rent a home in Louisiana with some roommates, but we're in a home in Louisiana where I use that Louisiana kitchen for the Louisiana cottage laws and my Louisiana customers. So I do follow the laws of both states.

[00:11:58] Just, I just don't wanna get in trouble, but I do follow the laws of both states with the cottage laws.

[00:12:04] **David Crabill:** Wow, that is really unique. I, I don't think I've heard anyone say that they actually have two houses in different. So now, would you be renting out this house or have this other house anyway or is that just for the business?

[00:12:19] **Barbara Williford:** That's just for the business. I did look into commercial kitchens and I thought that's the direction I wanted my business to go. But I really like being a cottage baker because I work from home, whichever home, but I do work from home. My hours a little bit more flexible. I don't have the overhead that I normally would.

[00:12:44] Even having a second home in Louisiana, it's still cheaper than renting a commercial kitchen and having that overhead.

[00:12:52] **David Crabill:** Wow, that is quite a dedication to follow. I'm sure that there are a lot of people in your area or along the state line that just sell in both states. Like they don't really worry about it, right.

[00:13:04] **Barbara Williford:** with cottage laws, you know, we see a lot of people either they don't know there is laws. I'll confess, when I first started, I

had no idea there was cottage laws. I just started baking case for people. So a lot of people aren't aware that there are these cottage laws that they need to follow.

[00:13:21] And then there are some, like, speeding. They just, they don't do it until they get caught, you know? but I'm trying to make this as legitimate as possible, especially since I went full-time with.

[00:13:32] **David Crabill:** Considering that you're renting out another house in Louisiana to make that work, did you ever consider just like. Only taking orders in Texas or only offering pickup in Texas from Louisiana customers.

[00:13:47] **Barbara Williford:** Here's my unique situation. I'm a Texas transplant. I grew up in Louisiana. I was born and raised in the town that is closest to me in Louisiana, which is 23 miles away. It's not that far. I worked in this town all my life, so all my connections were in that city, in the surrounding cities, and we moved to Texas 23 years ago.

[00:14:15] But we still had that connection in Louisiana. So I, my customer base was in Louisiana. I'm just now working on building up my Texas base, but when I started this, everybody I knew was in Louisiana and so I had to work to make it legal for my Louisiana I've been working the past several years on growing it in Texas.

[00:14:39] But my main customer base was in Louisiana, so I had to follow those laws and do that legally.

[00:14:46] **David Crabill:** Speaking of serving like both communities, I did see from looking through your social feeds, it seems like communities very important to you. And can you just share a little bit about what you do to pour into the community where you are?

[00:15:00] **Barbara Williford:** I do believe in giving back. As far as the community, I do quite a few donations. the current one I am doing now is a local learning Center is doing a chilling read. And so they have a grid for children and adults. And on this, it's kinda like a bingo game. And they have, you know, the more they read um, once they fill their card up or they get a bingo, then they have local businesses that will contribute a price.

[00:15:34] So I'm an avid reader. The owner of this business is a big supporter of me and I just, I think children need to learn how to read. Adults need to get into reading. And so when they fill their card, they get their free cookie for me.

we have a military base in Louisiana. I'm a big supporter of the military, so they get a military discount for me as well as first responders.

[00:16:00] Local schools have asked me to do donations and contribute to them and I'll do that as well. I'm, I'm scared to say this, but I have a hard time saying no. And you know, if it's a cause that is dear to my heart and I feel that it will, benefit the community, then I'm gonna do whatever I can to help them.

[00:16:22] Whether it's, you know, um, there's a, local animal shelter. They were trying to raise money, so I donated cake to them for them to raffle. So, you know, I try to do whatever financially I can to help support our local community and just, to give back to them. I've been really, really blessed with this business and our family has been blessed.

[00:16:45] I just wanna try to give back as much as I can.

[00:16:49] **David Crabill:** Well, your involvement with the community is certainly apparent and you might give a lot away, but you clearly still are running a very legitimate business as uh, you mentioned you're doing it full-time, so when did it feel like you were ready to, I don't know, retire and you are ready to actually take this full-time?

[00:17:10] **Barbara Williford:** Well I probably would say the last five years I was working full-time and running this full-time. So I would probably put in about 40 hours for my cake business and probably 50 hours in my full-time job. And I didn't make the decision to go full time. I'll tell you the story about that.

[00:17:32] When Covid hit, I was a teacher. and we were doing, you know, virtual classes and at the end of that, semester that, that's just really hard on the kids and teachers. And my husband saw that and he said, look, just Quit your job. We can afford for you to quit right now and just go full-time with your business.

[00:17:54] And that was a very scary move for me. He had faith in me. He had faith in my business. He had more faith in me, in my business than I did. But that was a very scary decision to quit a job I had been at for 20 years and had a steady paycheck coming in every month. And to leave all that behind and walk away from that and to run this full-time that was a scary move.

[00:18:22] But I figured if he supported me and he felt like that's the direction I needed to go, then I would go with it. And it really has allowed me to put more

time into my business more time on growing my business, more time for more orders. So it was a big step for me, but we've made it work and it's been great.

[00:18:46] **David Crabill:** Now that you've seen. It's like to be full-time in the bakery. Do you wish you had left your job sooner?

[00:18:56] **Barbara Williford:** I don't know if the timing would've been right in 2020. That was just the right time for me to leave. I'm a firm believer in timing and I'm hardworking, I'm dedicated. I, I could have made it work, but I just think that was just the right time to walk away from and close that chapter with my full-time job.

[00:19:16] And then to start this one full-time. It also started about the time that we started having grandkids, and so it also allows me. keep my schedule flexible and to be there for them.

[00:19:29] **David Crabill:** So let's talk about like what got you to that point, right? I know you said you were selling cakes and such, but like what do you actually sell in your business and how has that changed over time?

[00:19:43] **Barbara Williford:** My main focus starting out was just celebration cakes, birthdays, anniversaries. I've grown into the wedding niche and I have found out that I really like to do wedding cakes. They're a little bit more stressful, but I just love the elegance and, the creativity of groom's cake. So I'm still doing celebration cakes.

[00:20:07] Wedding cakes are another focus, and here lately decorated cookies have become a really big thing. So during Covid I took some online cooking classes, and practiced with the decorated cookies. And so that seems to have taken off just as much as the cakes have. So the cakes, the cookies and the wedding cakes, that has been my niche up until December.

[00:20:36] And in December I started cookie classes. So I have been doing cookie classes in Louisiana and I just partnered with a venue in Texas to offer cookie classes there. I didn't realize how much I missed teaching till I started doing the cookie classes. So that's a new direction I'm going.

[00:20:56] I'm gonna do cookie classes cake decorating classes, cake pop classes. And that just allows me to still be creative and, still use my passion as being a teacher. So that's another direction I'm headed with, the business is the classes.

[00:21:13] **David Crabill:** As you think back over what's been 13 years now almost are there any orders or cakes that really stand out to you?

[00:21:23] **Barbara Williford:** I really have enjoyed all of them. I love the creativity. I guess the ones that really stand out as we mentioned before, are, my family's wedding cakes. I did my son's groom cake and then my daughter's wedding and groom cake. So those were, personal, heartfelt. cakes. Some other ones that had special meaning was the ones that I did for Icing Smiles. And that is a collaboration of bakers that do cakes. They volunteer these cakes for terminally ill children and their siblings. that's part of giving back. You're gonna have me tear up now.

[00:22:03] Just, just because those were, more meaningful for these, children that had these, terminal conditions and just to see the smile on their face, you know, light up and the hugs they gave you, I guess those were pretty meaningful.

[00:22:18] **David Crabill:** So you've been at this for over 10 years now, and as you mentioned, you've seen these custom decorated cookies get really popular. Are there any other trends that you've sort of seen over a decade plus of running the business?

[00:22:33] **Barbara Williford:** I guess before I got started and right when I was starting out, it was. Wilton Pan One Dimension, cakes with the star tip on it. So that was, pretty much the trend as far as cakes go. And then with the Food Network and, you know, Cake Boss and all these competitions coming on, people started moving to sculpted cakes, more elaborate cakes.

[00:23:04] Pinterest came along. The cakes got, you know, more extravagant, more elegant more bigger and more decorative, more three-dimensional. So just the style of cakes have evolved over time. It's just amazing how they've just, the complexity of the cakes and the creativity in the cakes. Something else that has been popular here lately are the number cakes where it's a, carved number and it's decorated I've seen that in our community. That's been a popular one. the cocoa bomb craze that's not really cakes, but you know, that came along. Those were always fun. In my area, because I'm in Louisiana. King cakes are really big, and so we'll have king cakes, we'll have king cake, wedding cakes.

[00:23:59] Cookie cakes have become really popular. Wedding cake cookie cakes are, popular too. So, the trend is just as I mentioned earlier decorated cookies have become really popular lately.

[00:24:13] **David Crabill:** So can we talk about Mardi Gras a little bit? You mentioned the king cakes. How much does Mardi Gras affect your, yearly seasonal order schedule?

[00:24:23] **Barbara Williford:** I can sell a king cake year round just because where I'm at. Everybody loves a good king cake, but it's really popular. At the end of December, that's when people start ordering their king cakes and it goes till the end of Mardi Gras. And people are always wanting a good king cake. In Louisiana, they have a Mardi Gras parade every weekend for probably four or five weeks.

[00:24:53] And so people are, are celebrating, celebrating Mardi for months. So King cakes are a really uh, big deal up here. anything Mardi Gras related, Mardi Gras cookies, Mardi Gras cakes. People go all out for Mardi Gras and we're in northern Louisiana. We're not even in Southern Louisiana where it's really big down there. But we love our maria gras.

[00:25:19] **David Crabill:** I feel like most bakers, you know, especially those who do wedding cakes, obviously the height of their season is in the summertime there's graduations, right? Or then there's the holidays, that's the end of the year. Mardi Gras, like the beginning of the year or I guess you, you mentioned like when people start ordering the cakes, but is like, is Mardi Gras one of the most busy times you have or does it just sort of like balance the rest of the year?

[00:25:44] **Barbara Williford:** it is a busy time for me. It's not one of my busiest. May. Graduate during graduation season. The kickoff of wedding season in October, November, and December tend to be my busiest time. We are in the south. It's very hot down here. So our wedding season is March, April, may, sometimes the 1st of June.

[00:26:11] But most weddings it's just too hot in the summertime, so they'll pick back up September, October, November, December. So we don't have very many summertime weddings. It's just too hot here.

[00:26:23] **David Crabill:** I did notice that you offered 25 flavors of cakes, which sounded incredibly high to me. how do you manage that and like, have you ever thought about pairing down your menu?

[00:26:38] **Barbara Williford:** Well, it's funny, I do offer 25 flavors, but I have. About seven or eight that people just go to. I'll send them the menu, but they still wanna go with, you know, some of the basic flavors. So I think I've

only had one in the past year where we really had some fun with some flavors and they thought outside the box, but I, I probably should scale it down some and eliminate some of those cakes that, I haven't made for people.

[00:27:10] But I just want people to understand that they're not limited. If they come up with a flavor they want, I'm gonna do my best to get it to them. And I, I want them to understand that there's not a limit, you know, I can try to meet their needs as far as flavors go.

[00:27:28] **David Crabill:** Well, let's talk about pricing a little bit. Can you remember like what you started to price your cakes out at and you know, all the way up until maybe when you took it full-time and then today?

[00:27:40] **Barbara Williford:** Oh my goodness. My first wedding cake I did, it was a five tiered wedding cake and I charged a hundred dollars and I probably spent \$200 just on the ingredients and the materials. So when I first started out, I had no idea what I was doing, absolutely none. And then I started charging what I thought people would pay for it, you know, oh, well, I think people are gonna pay this for it, or, I would try to look around at what everybody else was charging and I really didn't have.

[00:28:18] Any idea what I was doing. And I started joining some Facebook groups Facebook bakery businesses. And, and I started learning a lot about how to run a business and how to run a bakery business. And I invested probably 10 years ago in a cake calculating program.

[00:28:41] I use Cake Boss. And that was a big eyeopener for me.

[00:28:45] When I started to put in my expenses, it was an eyeopener to how much money I was losing. I was pretty much given everything away and working for free. And so once I started keeping up with all my expenses. And my budget. Then I was able to look at it from a business perspective and think what I needed to change, what I needed to alter.

[00:29:13] I started using that program to help with my, cake quotes. So that really helped me a lot to actually see it on paper, to see how much I was bringing in, how much I was spending, how much I was losing. So once I started keeping track of what was coming in and what was going out, that helped me adjust my prices.

[00:29:35] Now my prices have gone up throughout the years. the more experience I get I'm still taking classes. I'm still learning when my skill level

goes up, you know, I'll give myself a pay raise when expenses go up, like butter and eggs about killed us bakers, I had to adjust my prices based on that.

[00:29:57] Now those are coming down so I can come down on my prices. But it was just putting the numbers to paper, seeing what I have, and then coming up with my quotes from there.

[00:30:09] **David Crabill:** So what do you charge now for your cakes?

[00:30:12] **Barbara Williford:** it always depends on the number of people they wanna serve and the extravagance of the cake. So I may have a cake that serves 24 people and it's just a basic, icing with some chocolate drip that's gonna be a whole lot different than a cake that serves 24 people that I have.

[00:30:38] Make all these hand sculpted toppers to go on top, or the flowers, or there's more fondant work on it. So it's really gonna depend on the time and labor that goes in it and the cost of materials. So I always tell people it's gonna depend on the number of people you serve and the design of the cake.

[00:31:01] I really can't set a standard price and it cover it all, if that makes sense.

[00:31:06] So for custom cakes, a big part of the quote is gonna be the time it takes to make that it is a custom item and it does take time and a skill level to make that cake.

[00:31:21] **David Crabill:** Is there like a lowest. Price that you like. if an order is below a certain amount, like you'll say no to it.

[00:31:29] **Barbara Williford:** No, I give them a quote and if they're okay with that quote, I'll do the cake. the only time I'll turn somebody away is if I'm completely booked, and I've, I still try to work them in to take the cake, but I don't turn orders away, you know, if they're okay with that price, then we'll go ahead and get them booked and put on the calendar.

[00:31:52] **David Crabill:** I, I also noticed that you charged for wedding cake sampling like just consultation for a custom order which I know not all bakers do. So like how did you decide to um, charge for those things?

[00:32:07] **Barbara Williford:** Well, it does take. it takes time. It takes materials and ingredients to make that sample cake. I give them a choice of three flavors of cake, three flavors of filling, and three flavors of buttercream.

So it would probably take me about three or four hours to get all that done and boxed up and, I just don't throw it in a box.

[00:32:33] You know, I, put it in there. I'm try to make it as elegant as possible. We've got some forks and knives instruction sheet. I wrap it up with the bow because that's going to, oh, a wedding customer. If we sit down and have a consultation, that's also 30 more minutes of my time. And all that's time away from the kitchen and time is money.

[00:32:57] And you know, I'm running a business. But what I do offer for my customers I do charge them \$55 for this wedding cake sample. And we can do contactless where they pick it up and they take it home and taste it. Or we can sit down and have a consultation. And if they choose to book with me, then I take that \$55 and apply it to their cake order.

[00:33:23] So if I do from a business perspective, if I spend all that time and all that money preparing this wedding cake sample, I still need a charge for it. But I'm also gonna give my bride and groom a perk. If they book with me, they can get that applied to their cake. As a little perk, if they don't book with me, I'm still not out of that.

[00:33:48] Overhead in that time and that cost?

[00:33:51] **David Crabill:** I did see that you offer free delivery, which is pretty surprising. Can you walk me through that decision?

[00:34:00] **Barbara Williford:** Well, we, we've talked about my location. I live right on the Louisiana, Texas state line, but I also live 23 miles from the closest city on either side. So the closest city to me in Louisiana is 23 miles, and the closest city in Texas is 23 miles. So I'm pretty much out in the country and nothing is out here.

[00:34:26] And I don't wanna have to ask my customers to drive this far out to pick up a cake. it's my choice to live out here in the country, in the peace and quiet. It's my choice to run my business out here. And I just don't think it's fair to ask my customers to come this far out to pick up their cake.

[00:34:46] So part of my service is to deliver the cake to them, and there's a plus side to it. With cakes and transportation of cakes, it's really a delicate thing. And if I spend all this time in this cake, I wanna make sure it gets safely to its destination. I wanna make sure that there is an intact cake that is

[00:35:11] at the, party at the wedding. And so I just choose to deliver the cake. If there's any problem along the way. I have the experience to fix it when I get there. Take care of that. I know how to drive with the cake. I know how to care for it during transport, and I just think it better serves my customers to deliver the cake to them.

[00:35:36] **David Crabill:** So you live in a rural area, but you also. On your website, you sell like cinnamon rolls. You, you know, at certain times sell like hot cocoa bombs. You sell cake balls, you sell like these kinda lower value items. And I was just wondering, like, I imagine people aren't driving all the way out to pick up those from your house, right?

[00:35:58] So did you, you know, free delivery for all those, do you charge for delivery? Um, How does that work?

[00:36:04] **Barbara Williford:** I have free delivery if the order is a hundred dollars or more. If it's lower than a hundred dollars, I usually meet them at a certain location where I'm not driving as far out. There are a couple of coffee shops that I've worked with I usually do pickups with them.

[00:36:27] And so I do, say, you know, meet me here at this, coffee shop, and we can meet for pickup. That way they're not driving all the way out here and I'm trying to balance out our driving time so I'm not losing a whole lot of money on gas and travel. For these, these smaller priced items.

[00:36:45] But I'm still providing a service and people that, order, one dozen cookies or one dozen cake pops they don't mind meeting me at these locations. I still would hate for them to drive this far out, but I try to make it, you know, a little bit easier on myself.

[00:37:03] **David Crabill:** As I was looking through your pictures, one cake really stood out to me is this like octopus pirate cake, and it just stood out because it's very different from all the other cakes that you do. Like. Is there a story behind that cake?

[00:37:21] **Barbara Williford:** There is a story behind the cake that is little Davy Jones and I had mentioned that I am always taking cake classes and always trying to learn and improve my skill. And I had wanted to learn how to make sculpted cakes and I took a cake decorating course from Limbo Sullivan. He is a Food Network star.

[00:37:48] He does instructional classes for cakes and cookies. He is a phenomenal, he is a rock star in the cake community, and he offered this class it was three hours away from me, so I spent a weekend taking this class and I learned a lot of skills from him and I learned how to do sculpted cakes, and that's, that was a fun one.

[00:38:14] It's a cake. I can do in cake. That one's a dummy cake, but I do like to take it to events and bridal shows, and it just wows a lot of people because it is different and it is unique and he's so stinking cute.

[00:38:29] **David Crabill:** So you do events, you do bridal shows, like how do you get your name out there and how do you market your business more?

[00:38:36] **Barbara Williford:** as you mentioned, one thing I do is bridal shows. I've started doing more of those since I went full-time, and I really believe in networking and I think events such as bridal shows is a great way to do it. Not only do you meet potential customers and clients, you get your name out there, but you also meet the vendors and not everybody there is gonna be a cake decorator.

[00:39:07] So the best thing to do to get your name out there is network with other vendors I usually like to walk around, get their card get their story, you know, how did you get started? You know, what's your expertise? And I always ask them, how can I help you? How can I help your business? How can I refer you?

[00:39:33] And then they go in my. Referral contacts, and if anyone ask me, say for florals, or if they need somebody that does transportation limousines. If they need a caterer, then I'll refer. them to this contact that I made, and it's the law of reciprocity. They do the same to me. So they're a reliable vendor that's referring people to me, and I'm referring people to them.

[00:40:05] And that's actually how I met some of these businesses that I do popups with. It was these event coordinators that put me in contact with a business and we developed this collaboration, this partnership, and so that's really. Best way to get your name out there is to just network with other business owners, and they'll refer you, you refer them.

[00:40:32] If you have the mindset of helping others grow it really comes back to bless you in the end. So that's really where, how I got my name out there was the other vendors, event coordinators get to know all the party event coordinators in your area. Get to know the venues, meet with the venues, get to

know the owners take samples to them and say you would like to be on their vendor list.

[00:41:00] Um, that, that's another, way is to always take samples. Every time I have an appointment, I take samples to the doctor, to the vet, to the dentist. I'm always taking samples to people. And that'll get your name out too.

[00:41:15] **David Crabill:** Do you think that's what's made you so successful and able to take this full-time, is just like how social you are or all the networking that you've done?

[00:41:24] **Barbara Williford:** One part that has helped me become successful is my current client base and their referrals. They refer me to people that they know somebody has eaten the cake at the party or the wedding, and they get my name that way. So that is a big part, but I think the networking and meeting other people is that really.

[00:41:52] My business to another level, just having their referral and collaborating with them. I've done a lot of collaborations with people partnerships with people. that's really been the clincher for the business.

[00:42:08] **David Crabill:** And I see you've also sold at events markets. how much has that been part of getting your name out there?

[00:42:17] **Barbara Williford:** for my business. It's all about trial and error, trying something new, see if it works, see if that's a niche for me. If it works, great, I'll keep doing it. If not, then I'll move on to something else. I think that's part of being a business is growing and seeing what works, especially with the changing of times, you know, things are changing and you got to evolve with what's going on.

[00:42:44] I did try markets but that wasn't my niche, that just wasn't my area that I felt like I needed to go. Because I sell celebration cakes and wedding cakes and bigger cakes at markets they tend to want the smaller things like drop cookies and breads and cake pops and things that I really don't push to sell.

[00:43:12] So I really wasn't seeing where I was getting a whole lot of. Cake. Customers from that markets are great for people. I have a friend, she can make thousands of dollars every weekend, but it's based on what she sells, and that's just not the direction where my business was gonna go. Now I will do events for.

[00:43:34] People I have collaborated with our partnership with networked with, for example there's a couple of coffee shops that I will do popups there and we collaborate. We'll sit down, we'll come up with a theme, we'll come up with giveaways, how we're gonna promote it. There's a lot that goes into it.

[00:43:59] And so if it's someone that I've networked with and they wanna partnership like that, I'll do it. That will get my name out. That will also get their name out. My customers will come for me, buy from them. Their customers will come for them and buy for me. There's a local event planner. She does children's parties and events.

[00:44:22] If she wants me to be a vendor there I'll go ahead and I'll be a vendor there. It's usually like holiday type events. But that's primarily not where my focus is. I will do it if a collaboration partner asks me to just to keep that network relationship. don't, you don't sell big cakes at these types of events.

[00:44:44] So I'm just keeping my focus on those wedding cakes and celebration cakes, decorated cookies in my.

[00:44:53] **David Crabill:** I definitely am noticing like a trend and always wanting to give back, always wanting to say yes to people. Giving samples out wherever you go. Making donations definitely seem to be very service oriented. And how do you find the balance between, like giving and also making sure that you have a sustainable and profitable business.

[00:45:20] **Barbara Williford:** That is very, very tricky because like I said previously, I have a hard time saying no. this year I, I ran the numbers and I did have to give myself a budget, so, you know, I do have, for my business, this is the budget that I'm gonna use throughout the year to give back. Instead of saying just yes to everybody, I am gonna unfortunately have to be a little bit more selective on the organizations I need to donate to. Because if I don't, I will end up losing more money than I'm making. And it's just, you can't run a business that way. it's gonna have to be more self-disciplined for me.

[00:46:01] **David Crabill:** So does that indicate last. Like you know, maybe you didn't really pay yourself enough. Some of it came out of your own profits.

[00:46:09] **Barbara Williford:** Uh, Yes. it comes out of my salary. because I gave away so much, I, I didn't get to pay myself. So I'm, I'm hoping that, like I said, I've become more disciplined. Can be more mindful of my expenses.

[00:46:24] **David Crabill:** I mean, the flip side of that would be a lot of people would say, you know, like, you can never give too much. Like, it'll all come back to you eventually. Is that something that you believe?

[00:46:36] **Barbara Williford:** I do believe, and that's one of the reasons that I've been so willing to donate, is because I really have, I have been blessed. I have been blessed personally and I have been blessed with this business. And so that's one reason that I couldn't say no.

[00:46:55] I just went ahead and did it.

[00:46:57] **David Crabill:** Well, is it even super important for you to like, make a, a decent profit from the business? Like is it one of those things that you love so much that you would just practically do it for free to help other people or is it like you really, really want to grow this as a profitable business?

[00:47:18] **Barbara Williford:** I really want to grow this as a profitable business. One because my daughter It still shows an interest in it, and I'm hoping one day she'll pick it up. you know, I do need to make money to cover my overhead. I do need to make money to cover all my expenses. I do need a profit margin so that I can invest back into my business.

[00:47:42] So far, I've been blessed to have a cash business, and so I really don't want to get in debt with this. I would like to show. Some revenue and be in the clear and not, you know, lose money. Because then that's coming out of my personal pocket. And I always you know, made a commitment to my family that I would keep our money separate and that, you know, I wasn't gonna take from our personal side to keep this business growing And I do need to make a profit to keep it going. Any business does you do, you can't work for free. You can't do it for free, or you won't have a business. I mean, you can't give it all away and put yourself out of business. You do need to make some money to keep your business.

[00:48:29] **David Crabill:** So you mentioned that you are doing classes now. Is that like, I would imagine turning into kind of a profitable additional revenue stream?

[00:48:40] **Barbara Williford:** I am super excited about these classes. We have had so much fun and it is a profitable side of the business. it has business-wise, it has been a smart move. I'm still working on getting it off the ground, getting the name out there that we're having cookie classes. I don't know of any other baker.

[00:49:03] In Louisiana or Texas? That is, well, I do know one in Texas, but I don't know any other bakers that are doing this. And so it's me trying to get something new off the ground, getting the word out there. But yes, it is something that has the potential to be very profitable for the business.

[00:49:25] **David Crabill:** I'm surprised with your teaching background. I mean, not before you retired obviously, but afterwards, like why didn't you consider. Like starting cake classes. I know you're doing the cookie classes now, and I think you're, you're also doing cakes in there as well, but why did it take you so long to consider teaching?

[00:49:45] **Barbara Williford:** I think once I went full-time, it blew up. I got so busy, I was just doing everything I could to keep up with the orders that I had, to keep up with the running of the business. As a business owner, there's a lot involved in running the business besides just making the cakes and, and decorating it.

[00:50:08] But it took off and I was so busy. It was just keeping my head above water and I really never thought about it. Because I was, you know, my focus was elsewhere. And I had some time, a little bit of downtime to kind of evaluate and think about what direction I wanna go. And I thought, well, let's, let's try cookie classes, if I ever wanted to scale back and I physically wasn't able to carry these 70 pound cakes anymore, then I would have something that I have built up that I can continue going, continue moving forward. If I did want to scale back on the cake side of it I've also been doing, one-on-one personal cake decorating classes.

[00:50:58] At Christmastime, people were buying gift certificates so that I could do one-on-one classes. I have done cake decorating parties in the past. But I really didn't think about starting that as a revenue focus. But I really think that's the direction I'm gonna go now because more people are wanting to do home-based businesses.

[00:51:23] People are interested in cookie decorating. It's a really big deal where I live. So I really think that this could be a direction to take my business and it would be profitable.

[00:51:36] **David Crabill:** So it sounds like you're, pretty busy. You obviously have these classes now, and then sounds like you've got a lot of orders throughout the year. Is it just you, I mean, obviously there's your daughter that helps sometimes, but have you ever had any employers or anything like that?

[00:51:55] **Barbara Williford:** So far it is just me. It was my daughter, my husband. He does help. He is free help. He'll help me with clean up. He'll help me with packaging some cookies. He is an excellent delivery driver. Um, So he'll deliver some orders for me. He'll help me set up for events, take down events. I am finding myself in a position actually next week where I am gonna have to hire some help for an event I'm doing.

[00:52:28] So I do have a friend that has some baking experience, so she's gonna come and help me out. I have tried to hire before, but most of my focus is on weekends and a lot of people have other plans on the weekend. Their kids are committed to something. So, so far it's just me. I would like to get in a position where I could hire more people, find the right person so that, that's definitely a goal of mine.

[00:52:58] **David Crabill:** So you've been running this for a long time now. Now you've taken it full time As you think back on it, why has the business been meaningful to you?

[00:53:08] **Barbara Williford:** The way it started out has so much meaning just because it's something my daughter and I did together and, you know, it started out with meaning. And then I just love doing things for people. I love making these cakes and delivering these cakes and see the look on their face when they, get this cake, or they, they give me an idea and their idea, you know, becomes a reality.

[00:53:35] And just, it's. satisfying and meaningful just to, deliver the product and, see the look on their face and the joy and, it's hard to explain.

[00:53:48] **David Crabill:** Well, as you think about the future of your business do you have any short-term or long-term goals? Where would you like to see it go?

[00:53:58] **Barbara Williford:** well, a long, long-term goal. I would, would like to continue this business. My daughter has mentioned a business plan where we could. Incorporate this business with her business plan. would, I would like to see it come full circle and her get this back and it'd be part of her future and her daughter's future.

[00:54:21] That would be a long-term goal for me. Short-term goals, I, I really wanna see where these classes take off. so far, they're enjoying them. We have so much fun and I would like to see, you know, if they're gonna continue to take

off and people are gonna enjoy them, especially once I start adding the cake and possibly a cake pop class.

[00:54:46] So long term, I want this to be something that I could give back to my daughter and her daughter. Um, Short term, just trying new things figuring out what the need of the community is and see if I can meet that need.

[00:55:01] **David Crabill:** Well, Barbara, I'm so glad that you came on and shared your story with us. Now, if people would like to learn more about you, where can they find you or how can they reach out?

[00:55:12] **Barbara Williford:** I do have a website at royaltysweetshop.com. They can reach me through the contact links there. I'm also on social media, on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok the same Royalty Sweet Shoppe, and they can reach me through direct messaging with any of those social media outlets.

[00:55:33] **David Crabill:** Great. Well, thank you so much for coming on and sharing with us.

[00:55:38] **Barbara Williford:** Thank you so much for allowing me to, this was great. I appreciate.

[00:55:44] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager Podcast.

[00:55:50] For more information about this episode, go to forrager.com/podcast/89 And if you're enjoying this podcast, please take a quick moment right now and leave me a review on Apple Podcasts.

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[00:56:23] Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.