

# From Corporate Burnout to Cottage Food with Susan Ting

**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 Susan Ting. 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?

[00:00:18] A lot of entrepreneurs still think they need to spend money to get a good website, and that is simply not true anymore. I am a really big fan of Square Online. That's what I use for my Fudge business' website. And I created a free tutorial that will walk you through how to set up a totally free website in less than an hour.

[00:00:36] 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. So if you wanna learn more, you can watch my free tutorial by going to [forrager.com/website](http://forrager.com/website). All right, so I have Susan Ting on the show today.

[00:00:58] Susan lives in Needham, Massachusetts and sells gluten-free mochi, baked goods with her cottage food business, Everyday Bakeshop. During the pandemic, Susan was feeling burnt out from her corporate job and finally decided to quit. She had no intention to start a business of her own, but after doing more baking at home, along with encouragement from friends and family, she realized that her love for baking could become more than just a hobby.

[00:01:26] Due to her son's allergies. She already had plenty of experience baking gluten-free desserts, and finally decided to jump all in with the business to see where it would lead. Susan started her business just over a year ago, and she's already selling at a few markets each week and has built a strong following of returning customers.

[00:01:43] In this episode, you'll hear about her transition from corporate burnout to cottage food and what it's been like starting a business with very unique and high-end products. And with that, let's jump right into this episode. Welcome to the show, Susan. Nice to have you here.

[00:02:01] **Susan Ting:** Thank you, David. Thanks for having me.

[00:02:04] **David Crabill:** Susan, can you tell us how this business got started?

[00:02:08] **Susan Ting:** Yeah, so every day's bake shop is fairly new for me. It's only been a little bit over a year since I started this business. I really started in beginning of last year after I quit my corporate job. I was working in corporate for a long time, honestly, just burnt out from it needed space to just kind of relax a little bit and I never went back and decided to start a home bakery instead.

[00:02:41] **David Crabill:** Well, I I want to ask you a little bit about the burnout. So what, what were you doing as a corporate job?

[00:02:48] **Susan Ting:** So I was in the Bay Area. I was working in tech as an HR in global benefits. Working in a company during the Covid time. They were just thriving, growing really fast, and it was, you know, a typical desk job. And after so long kind of doing the same thing in a sense over and over again and having more of a workload and working in a different time zone.

[00:03:16] Because I was working for a Bay Area company while living in Massachusetts. It was a lot.

[00:03:23] **David Crabill:** how did you know, like this has to stop?

[00:03:27] **Susan Ting:** that's a great question. You know, I didn't notice the symptoms for a long time, and I think especially during the pandemic when I was stuck at home raising two children and they're in school, and then my husband also has his full-time job. In the beginning it was mental, it was you know, almost like a brain fog.

[00:03:46] Like so much going on, juggling everything. And then physical symptoms occur where my body was just over tired. Um, I remember clearly one time I was, started having chills and shivering. It was like a reaction to something and I don't want, I, I don't have any allergies. It was just so strange. It was just from, I think, the exhaustion.

[00:04:10] My body just broke down and I just basically had to like, take a nap, like a long nap in the middle of the day out of nowhere. It was signs like that, that you think, oh, maybe it's just me. No, it's, it's a lot more than that. So all that compounding symptoms mental, physical made me realize, oh, maybe it's not just me, it's something else.

[00:04:32] And, and then, once I left my job and I took a three month break thinking that I'll go back, you know, that three months time, everything was different. Physically, mentally, I was clear, I felt lighter, I was happier. And that was definitely a sign for me that my job wasn't doing anything for me as a person for my body and for my health.

[00:04:53] So, yeah, it was pretty crazy. I've never went through something like that before.

[00:04:57] **David Crabill:** I'm sure many people can kind of relate to this feeling of. like they just can't do all the things that they need to do in a day. And feeling stuck, right? Because maybe they're relying on this income. So were you in a position of being able to leave without having to worry about the income piece?

[00:05:17] **Susan Ting:** I was, and I think that's the reason why. I can do what I do now is because I have the luxury to be able to leave my job and my husband still has his job, so we can still live off of one income, and that was helpful. I know that not everyone can do that. Um, you know, talk to your HR team because there are ways to take a personal leave or medical leave when that happens to you, because if your body's telling you that something's wrong, it's probably because something is wrong.

[00:05:49] And, we just have to be more attuned to that.

[00:05:53] **David Crabill:** So you clearly quit your job for personal reasons, not because you were trying to pursue a business. So where did this whole business kick in?

[00:06:02] **Susan Ting:** I told myself I was gonna quit my job and find a new wine in three months. I would just go back to the same type of job in three months time and I'll be fine. But three month passed and I was looking up jobs. I even got a few jobs actually. I actually went through interview process and I actually got some offers and I just, I actually turned them down like they were great offers and I just I just couldn't do it.

[00:06:25] I just couldn't say yes to them because I know, well, if I go back it'll basically be the same thing. I'll be doing the same thing. am I going to go through another burnout? And I don't want that. So I decided, okay, let's just take some more time off. And then during that time, I believe it was around Christmas, the holidays, and I always baked on holidays.

[00:06:43] I've been baking self-taught baker 15 plus years. I always bake for fun for friends, family. And I always make this cookie box, and my friend said, can I order three boxes from you? I wanna share it with my neighbors. And I was like, you're gonna pay me. Like, he's like, yeah, I wanna pay you. And I was like, okay.

[00:07:02] Like I would've done it for free because I, again, I love sharing my food. made three boxes of various cookies and treats and shared it. And then I thought, huh, there might be something here. from then on, I, I just started researching. And your podcast, your website was actually one of the first resources I found to help me understand how to get a license, how to do this legally in my home.

[00:07:28] and from then on, I just never stopped. I just continued on.

[00:07:32] **David Crabill:** So what did that look like in the beginning? I mean, it's one thing to be like, oh, maybe I could sell these. It's another thing to actually like put yourself out there.

[00:07:42] **Susan Ting:** It was definitely frightening. I would say officially I became a business in April. And I have to say, a little push came from my husband. I've always been very creative. I feel like I've always been, more rights, a right-sided brain, like I've always been creative and I just knew that I needed a creative outlet and baking is one of them.

[00:08:05] So my husband really was, someone says, you should just give it a shot. Try it. He actually created the L L C for me, so it was legit legally business, L I C. And then I started researching online. There was lots of information, but it was also, Everywhere. So it was definitely hard to kind of find the resources I need to understand, okay, how do I do this?

[00:08:26] What kind of certifications do I need? Where do I go? What does my, my town need as well legally to start this business? So it took a long time to get there and there was definitely, I guess you can say a little bit of fear of really going all out, but knowing that I have nothing to lose, that, you know, this is it.

[00:08:44] Like, I, I not, like I have a job anyway. Why not? I think that helped me overcome that fear because I'm gonna give it a shot, I don't know what that timeline looks like, but it's now or never. and that, I think is what helped push me forward to, get the license I need. Get the inspection done and then get all the insurance as well.

[00:09:06] And I started my first Instagram page, Everyday Bakeshop, and that was, I realized, oh, this is the real deal. I'm putting it out there. I'm putting it in the universe, so hopefully it'll work out.

[00:09:16] **David Crabill:** So after you made that first sale to a friend and, you said that was around Christmas time, and then April you said, it was when you actually got licensed. Were you just doing little orders here and there.

[00:09:29] **Susan Ting:** I was for, yep, for friends and family. I again, started an Instagram page kind of. Telling my friends, Hey, like I'm doing a box, you know, like a little popup, a little box of mixed treats. If you're interested, let me know. You know, I started Google Sheet taking orders, like was very small. And then that's when, you know, in April when everything was finalized with my business, that's when I really put my information out there and created a, a website, everything.

[00:10:03] **David Crabill:** So you already had some sense that this was at least gonna work to some degree right before you jumped all in into the licensing process, which can sometimes be significant in Massachusetts.

[00:10:16] **Susan Ting:** Yes and no, to be honest. I think it's, again, the whole thing about I have nothing to lose. I have no job anyway. Why not? So did I understand like what was gonna be coming along or what was expected and what I had to go through? Not really. But again, it also didn't scare me because I, I knew it was like one way, like I got to do this.

[00:10:38] There's nothing else on the plate right now. Why not? So I did it.

[00:10:42] **David Crabill:** So what was the licensing and inspection process like in Massachusetts for you?

[00:10:48] **Susan Ting:** I read the state, I had to go on the state website, read what they needed. But obviously I live in the town of Needham and Needham obviously have their paperwork that they would need and, and really they, needed me to get an allergen certificate in Massachusetts, making sure I understand about cross-contamination, et cetera.

[00:11:08] I needed to get an a food handling certificate as well, so I had to take a course and go through that and, make an appointment with the Needham Health Inspector. honestly, I was very nervous but it was fairly easy. Like they came in, they make sure my area was clean, the kitchen was clean, my food, my products were labeled.

[00:11:32] I also had another refrigerator. So being able to keep my products that I need for just baking for the business helps having it in a separate fridge. And you know what, it was like maybe 20 minutes and they're like, yeah, you pass. Like it was surprisingly, again, I was very scared that I wasn't gonna pass.

[00:11:54] It was gonna be really difficult, but it was a lot easier than I thought it was gonna be.

[00:11:59] **David Crabill:** Well, that's good to hear. I've definitely heard some horror stories actually out of Massachusetts, and I think that's one of the tricky things with your state is it really depends. Even like town to town, it can vary quite a bit. So it's good to hear that. For some people it's, it's quite easy to do.

[00:12:16] Now you have kids. Yes.

[00:12:20] **Susan Ting:** Yes, I do two,

[00:12:21] **David Crabill:** Two kids. And how old are they?

[00:12:25] **Susan Ting:** One is nine and the other is five.

[00:12:28] **David Crabill:** So they're school age.

[00:12:31] **Susan Ting:** Yeah. One is in preschool heading into kindergarten, and my son is just finished third grade.

[00:12:39] **David Crabill:** So there wasn't a part of you that was thinking about maybe just staying at home.

[00:12:44] **Susan Ting:** You know? Yes, I definitely thought about it. When my son was born, I stayed at home with him for a good year and a half before. And loved that time. I really did enjoy it. And being with my family is very important. It's priority. And, and the, that's also a reason why I, I had to quit my corporate job was because there was no balance.

[00:13:05] There was no life work balance for me. It was just always work, always on. So that was definitely part of it. I, I definitely thought about maybe I should stay at home and watch the kids. But you know, my son is already in the public school system and she was just my daughter and she really liked her daycare, her preschool, so, My husband, who is very wise, said to me, look, you can't stay at home and you can't pursue this business.



[00:13:31] You can probably do it both, but you're not gonna do it well. So if you seriously wanna try to pursue this home bakery business, you gotta go all in, then maybe you should just go all in and not worry about the children, because let's be real, if you have kids at home, you don't get a lot of work done. Um, and that's why, you know, again, it's only been over a year and my daughter is gonna be heading to kindergarten, so she'll be in a public school system as well. But I definitely really enjoy having the flexibility of owning my own business because I still made time for them. So after school I was able to pick them up, so I still get time with them.

[00:14:06] I wasn't missing out. And that's, What's the most important thing for me? That was, I was still available for their activities after school. Bring them to school, wake up with them, feed them breakfast, and not have to rush off to work. You know? So I had a balance there. It was fine.

[00:14:19] **David Crabill:** And I see that your son, at least in part, inspired the direction of this business.

[00:14:27] **Susan Ting:** Yes, he did. He definitely inspired my business and the way and how I baked. So When he was born, he was having skin issues and around two and three, he had some serious health issues where we felt hopeless. We didn't know what was happening. We, he was prescribed medicine, but it wasn't helping him.

[00:14:46] It was making his condition worse and we're just like confused. Like, you know, Western medicine is supposed to help. Why isn't it helping? So I obsessively went online and just started researching, how can I help? You know, what can I do? Because as a parent it stinks being helpless that you can't help your son.

[00:15:05] And I started, you know, found a blog, I don't exactly remember what it was, but it basically saying that food can be a culprit to health. What we eat, what we consume. So I was like, okay, well, gut health was definitely important. I was living in the Bay Area at the time and they are very fast forward with health in general.

[00:15:24] So I was like, okay, gut health, what does that mean? It means changing his diet, he couldn't eat gluten, dairy, milk, nuts. all the major allergens. Like I decided to take that all away. Started baking, have no idea how to bake gluten-free, nothing, none of that.

[00:15:40] I, I just usually bake regular good old cakes, cupcakes, cookies, you know, with all the gluten fat and stuff. And I had to teach myself how to bake and stumble upon using rice flour. So mochi donuts, muffins cakes. Started using rice flour a lot because I didn't want him to miss out on, you know, his birthday and not having a cake.

[00:16:00] once I discovered those ingredients, it became easier. that's how I kind of, Fell into baking gluten free baking with rice flour. So all my baked goods right now, not all, but most of my baked goods are mochi treats. So they're naturally gluten friendly as well. And, and that's the story behind it.

[00:16:19] So my son, definitely inspire me to think outside the box and to creatively make treats that are allergen friendly. So, here I am.

[00:16:30] **David Crabill:** I, I saw the term you just mentioned. Naturally. Gluten free, naturally gluten friendly, that word naturally. It's not usually something I see in conjunction with the term gluten free. Like what are you trying to say there?

[00:16:45] **Susan Ting:** I just want people to understand, hey, like I. work in a residential kitchen where frost contamination can happen. So I, I'm almost like wary of using the word a hundred percent gluten free, even though technically it's true. My baked goods don't have any gluten because again, of the flour that I use.

[00:17:04] I think for me, just make me feel better and let people understand that, yes, technically gluten-free, but if you have high sensitivities, like I just want to ensure them that there's still contamination in my kitchen.

[00:17:15] **David Crabill:** So most of your products are gluten free. How many of your customers are gluten free?

[00:17:23] **Susan Ting:** Not all of them. I would say I have a handful of customers who can't eat gluten and then the some who has Celiac. But I have also tried my products and they're fine eating it, which is amazing because I know can be really serious for some people. But yeah, I, I would say a handful can't eat it, but majority of them just likes to eat them.

[00:17:46] **David Crabill:** What can people like tell that they're gluten free? Like oftentimes there's a pretty significant texture difference, right?



[00:17:53] **Susan Ting:** Yes, they can tell, and they always ask me the number one question the farmer's market is like, what's the texture? Like what's the difference between using glutenous rice flour versus like regular flour? And it's the texture, like you can taste chewiness of it, and it's like almost bouncy and chewy. So it is a fairly different texture from like a, good old cake. But the taste is, I would say most of them get used to it right away. Once they're eaten, they're like, oh my gosh, like, this is amazing. Like, I've never tried anything like it. and then some are like, you know, the more maybe traditional dessert lovers like, oh yeah, it's okay.

[00:18:29] Like, it's not exactly for them. And that's.

[00:18:32] **David Crabill:** you make most of your products with the term mochi. Can you explain, if somebody's not familiar, what, what is mochi?

[00:18:41] **Susan Ting:** Yeah, so mochi is a term that I use to describe desserts that's made with rice flour. actually lived in Japan a little bit after I graduated college. And they have many desserts made with rice flour, and then you'll see them everywhere.

[00:18:57] so I wanna say mochi on my dessert menu. It's, because I use rice flour as the main ingredient there.

[00:19:03] **David Crabill:** You talked a little bit about your background, like how has your heritage influenced this business? I.

[00:19:11] **Susan Ting:** I mean, I'm Chinese American. I was born here, but my mom have used rice flour in her baking, and it's what I kind of grew up eating without realizing that it's made with rice flour. So it's always been part of me baking with these ingredients. I lived in Japan for a year and also learned a lot about mochi In Japan, it's very big there.

[00:19:36] They have these great desserts and they're filled with some sort of traditional paste that's sweetened, and it's what they like to eat over there. So, I think learning about the Japanese culture and my mom making food for me and, baking treats from my Chinese background, it really inspired the way I bake now.

[00:19:56] Um, you know, I, I was born and raised in America, so I grew up with, chocolate cakes and brownies and donuts. So I love mixing both my culture and American culture and creating, you know, what, I now have the

mochi donuts. It's kind of the best of both cultures, you know, who doesn't love good donut and why not make it a mochi donut?

[00:20:17] so yeah, that's really inspired me as well as having my Chinese American background and creating these delicious desserts for everyone to try.

[00:20:27] **David Crabill:** Do you share that with people? Like it just seems like it's part of your story and that it would be something that you would talk about at markets?

[00:20:35] **Susan Ting:** I do share that story. I mean, I think what inspired my business is really my son, right? And his allergens. and it reminded me to teach myself how to bake with this. But I do, I do talk about it. Maybe it's not as often as I would like to. But when I do get a chance I do share that story.

[00:20:54] Maybe it's a good idea to kind of share more on that on Instagram as well.

[00:20:57] **David Crabill:** So do you have to educate customers a lot?

[00:21:02] **Susan Ting:** I do. So I live in a town, Needham, and I would have to say that at least around my area, a lot of people have never tried anything like that, and especially being around the Boston area. So again, I moved from the Bay Area, the Bay Area has many types of desserts like these, you know, like mochi donut is a big thing out there.

[00:21:23] But now it's popping up here as well. So there are definitely a few places in the Boston area that make these mochi donuts. They're deep fried, and then the glaze with all these various glazes. So now it's definitely more popular and I think people understand it's like, oh, I had one before, but my treats are all baked.

[00:21:42] I bake everything. I don't, like to fry anything. So I always say it's a little bit healthy-ish and. and it is a little bit different from a fried mochi donut, but yeah, I, I do have to explain what that means. And then, funny enough, a lot of customers like, oh, do you mean those ice cream that's wrapped in mochi?

[00:21:59] And I was like, yes and no. Doesn't taste like that really. But the wrapper is mochi. It's rice flour. They used to wrap around the ice cream. So it's similar, it's the same ingredient, but it's different taste completely. So I get that a lot about the ice cream and mochi.

[00:22:15] **David Crabill:** Now, I believe mochi requires some level of processing to make it. Do you make your own mochi?

[00:22:24] **Susan Ting:** No, I do not. I buy the flour. It's a brand called Koda Farms. I love it. It's only a brand I use. And I, I do not grind or mill my own rice flour. I don't even know how to start that.

[00:22:39] **David Crabill:** Where do you get that from?

[00:22:42] **Susan Ting:** Any supermarket. Now, if you go to like the Asian aisle, like I found it at Wegmans, you definitely find them in Asian stores. But big supermarkets like Wegmans definitely have them now. And, and it's like a little box. It's an expensive little box, but it's definitely worth it for me to buy it than make my own.

[00:23:03] **David Crabill:** So you mentioned the mochi, donuts. What other items do you have on your menu?

[00:23:09] **Susan Ting:** Yeah, I also make mochi muffins, which is my personal favorite because sometimes I don't wanna glaze everything. And my mochi muffins has this crispy exterior, which I love the crunch with the chewy inside. I also make mochi, brownies mochi donuts, mochi brownies, mochi muffins. And I started getting into cookies, kind of the chunky levain style cookies And surprisingly people have really enjoyed them. So I started to do that. But that of course is not mochi base and is definitely a hundred percent good old chocolate chip cookie.

[00:23:45] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I saw that you sort of were hopping on this, you know, Levain style, like huge cookie trend, but it sounds like you're not like, super focused on keeping your business niche down to only gluten-free products. Like that's not super important to you.

[00:24:03] **Susan Ting:** again, I like being able to think outside of box and be creative, like, so it's whatever I feel like I wanna try. I would say a majority is going to be focused on mochi treats because I think to me, that is something special and it's something that isn't offered here right now. So I will definitely make that a majority of my menu.

[00:24:23] I think because I personally love cookies so much. I dabbled in it and surprisingly just got a really good feedback from my customers and they enjoy it, and keep asking about it, so I bring that back for them. But for most part, like, I'm not gonna start creating cakes or cupcakes anytime soon.

[00:24:42] Like, I'm not trying to get into every single type of baked goods. So I, I would say I'm kind of really stuck on, you know, my mochi, baked goods, and, a cookie here or there. Mm-hmm.

[00:24:51] **David Crabill:** Well, the mochi is obviously very unique, but also the flavors you use often are pretty unique. I mean, I saw earl grey tea, hibiscus, matcha, tahini. Is it just because you want to keep them special? Like what's inspiring all these unique flavors?

[00:25:10] **Susan Ting:** I'm always inspired by everything, I know that I didn't want to get my menu. Simple. Like I could, I do have like a good old donut with chocolate glaze and sprinkles. Everyone's favorite. But I'm always inspired by my travels everything that I eat that my kids enjoy and what they eat.

[00:25:33] So every month I try to create new menu items and I do try to make it different and, and sometimes those ingredients work and sometimes it doesn't, but I'm always experimenting. And so it's important for me, again, to make it a little bit different, you know? Who would've known these flavors will work together.

[00:25:52] But they do, and you can make mochi out of anything and any flavor. So it's been really fun. And I think I do it because it's fun for me to kind of think outside of the box and again, to be creative and to kind of think, oh, what goes well with what so I'm always challenging myself in that sense.

[00:26:09] **David Crabill:** Well, I can see that your products are very high quality and the ingredients you use are very high quality. They're also not inexpensive. Can you share a little bit about how you price these out?

[00:26:23] **Susan Ting:** Oh yeah, I would say I'm still working on the pricing out. You are right. Rice flour is not cheap. It's not like a bag of flour. It's definitely a lot more expensive. Butter again, in general is expensive. Eggs are expensive. This is really not a good time to start a bakery, but you know, if it's your passion.

[00:26:43] You gotta do it. But I think those ingredients in general is expensive. But then of course, then you add in. Organic matcha, you know, and then organic Earl Gray the chocolates I use, I try to use really premium chocolate and stuff. Like, I usually use chocolate chips without dairy in it because sometimes I like to make dairy free mochi treats for those who can't have dairy.

[00:27:05] those would cost a little bit more, right? So they are expensive. I definitely, beginning, I was winging it, I was like, well, this is what I would pay for it. I would say that it's not exactly smartest business thing to do. I think it's important that you do understand how to price everything out.

[00:27:21] So I stumble upon cake cost. to kind of see how I can price my goods. I recently attended a home-based food entrepreneur conference, which you also participated in, and that was super helpful. I think there was a lot of lecture about pricing food because at the end of the day, I do wanna make this a successful business and I do have to price it correctly because I also need to get paid as well.

[00:27:48] But it is hard for me because I also want people to enjoy them and what people pay this much for, you know, mochi muffin, and I always doubt myself. But I think moving forward I am using an app that would help me hopefully break down my costs better and really understand how to make real profit.

[00:28:05] **David Crabill:** So can you walk me through what your products are priced at right now?

[00:28:11] **Susan Ting:** My goods right now is between \$3.50 to \$4.50, depending on the ingredients that I use. So for Mochi Muffin is a little bit cheaper, unless it's like a special mochi muffin. My mochi donuts are definitely more than \$4 because I use real fruit. I don't use artificial flavoring.

[00:28:34] That's not what I do. So again, fresh fruit base glazes would cost more. Right. So I do charge over \$4 for those. And then I also make cakes as well. And my cookies are definitely cost around \$4.50 right now because they're over four ounces, usually depending on the toppings that I use in it or the ingredients that I use in it.

[00:28:54] **David Crabill:** Yeah, so \$4 for one donut or \$4. For one muffin. from what I can see online, I wouldn't say these look like they're huge. But that actually, that pricing doesn't super surprise me. I've seen that pricing from specialty baked shops or gluten-free and are targeting a very specific type of customer.

[00:29:17] But what is the customer reaction? Like you know, when you're at events or whatever, like, do people turn their nose up to it? Do you get pushback or are people totally fine with it?

[00:29:27] **Susan Ting:** You know, in the beginning when they didn't know my products, it would definitely was like, oh, \$4 for a mochi muffin. Like, what kind of special muffin is this? I was like, I get it. You know, they obviously don't understand what I'm using in there and what kind of ingredients I use. But a year later now that I think people are more open to trying specialty desserts and treats, so they are willing to pay the price to try it.

[00:29:49] And, and once they try it, they like, oh my gosh, they love it. But I still get those, a handful of those customers who, think that I'm charging \$4.50 for a dozen donuts. I'm like, oh, no, no, no sir, it's \$4.50 for one donut. And they definitely was like, oh yeah, no, I can go somewhere else. And I said, that's fine.

[00:30:08] You know, it is what it is not for everybody. So I would say majority, most of my customers don't even blink at that price tag. They're okay to pay it because a lot of them also know what they're gonna get.

[00:30:19] **David Crabill:** Now I saw that you, you know, sell half dozen amounts online. You sell dozen amounts and you charge exactly double for a dozen. Why haven't you set your pricing to be less per unit for a dozen and a little more per unit for a half dozen?

[00:30:40] **Susan Ting:** Yeah, I mean, I think that's definitely a strategy I can use. But I have found that most of my customers order half dozens because they actually want to try more flavors. I, when I do have a dozen, because I'm doing such small batch, I can't give them, let's say the donuts, right? I can't give them a variety of glazes on the donuts.

[00:30:59] you have to pick one glaze per half dozen because it's not feasible for me to make six different glazes for half dozen, you know, at one time it doesn't make sense. So I have found that most of them actually order by half dozens because they wanna get different flavors anyway.

[00:31:14] It's rare that they will want like a whole dozen. So I just, I haven't really need to do it to kind of price it the way that you mentioned. But it would be a good strategy I think if I get bigger orders and if I want to kind of really focus more on big events like, I don't know, weddings or big birthday parties or corporate events.

[00:31:35] But I'm not there yet.

[00:31:37] **David Crabill:** So you don't have any kind of incentive for them, to get a discount or something if they order multiple half dozens.



[00:31:45] **Susan Ting:** No, not that kind of discount, but I do offer a variety box sometimes. Sometimes I think people do ask for them. So when I have the time, I would offer, you know, this Saturday only pick up a box of six different treats, you know, contain like a donut cookie, a mini cake, or whatever it might be. And that's always goes well with the folks because again, they, they like the variety, but not in the pricing structure.

[00:32:12] Not yet.

[00:32:14] **David Crabill:** Looks like you also like to do holiday boxes.

[00:32:18] **Susan Ting:** do, they're really fun for me. Especially on like special holidays or every month there's always something going on, right? So like last month was a PI heritage month. So I wanted to do something special. So I made like this citrusy lemon mochi bun cake which feeds 12 plus people.

[00:32:41] And then part of the sales also was donated to part of dinner. Um, so I love doing stuff like that. And then other months like for June last year I did like a pride box with different colored donuts. It's just fun. It's just a way to push again, my creativity to push myself to just start something that is fun and delicious for everyone.

[00:33:05] **David Crabill:** I saw on your order form that you have an option when somebody's buying donuts to pay an extra \$5 to stack the donuts as a cake. I've never seen that before. Where did that come from? And do people,

[00:33:21] **Susan Ting:** a customer. I'm always inspired by my customer. Someone literally, I made a donut cake uh, mochi, donut cake, I guess is how I should call it for a friend. And I posted a picture of it, and then I got someone's like, oh, I want that. Can you make that for me? And I was like, sure. I mean, they could also buy the box and stack it themselves, but I was like, you know what, maybe it could be something.

[00:33:47] So I just offer as an option. And one customer. loved it and, and was like, oh, can you please put this into a cake form for me? I'm like, sure, why not? So I offer it. I would say not everyone does it, but it's something that I can do for you or you can do yourself right. To stack your mochi donuts.

[00:34:04] **David Crabill:** And then you also have like, Individual cakes that you sort of positioned for events.

[00:34:13] **Susan Ting:** Yeah. Yeah. I make these like mini mochi cake. They come in a rectangular tin, and it's really cute. I, I actually started at the farmer's market and people really like it. I put like a knife on it so they can cut it up and share with people. It's just another thing to do. I have customers who buy it for teacher appreciation week. It's a great way to individually give them to folks. Um, but yeah,

[00:34:41] **David Crabill:** where are you selling your products? Mostly?

[00:34:44] **Susan Ting:** yeah, so summertime, some farmer's market is definitely my busiest time. I sell them at Needham Farmer's Market. That's where I started last year. I only did one market last year, and this year I'm doing three markets. So I'm slowly, you know, putting myself out there, which is definitely a little bit scary as well.

[00:35:04] Um, And I don't bake them days in advance. So I know that, you know, with cakes you can sometimes bake them in advance, freeze them, and then frost them. For the day off. So you have like a week to really build up your inventory. For Farmer's Market, I don't really get that because mochi really tastes good the day off.

[00:35:21] So much like, you know, a French croissant I'm, you do have to wake up early and you do have to bake them. So I, right now I'm doing three farmer's markets. One of them is later in the morning, which is helpful. I don't have to wake up that early. And then there's another two also around the local town, one in Newton, one in Rosendale.

[00:35:40] And that's an early farmer's market, so I do have to wake up early, early for those to kind of start my oven and start baking. But so far it's been really fun and I do really well there. Like people just really like trying my stuff at Farmer's Market and you know, they know where to find me. So that helps a lot.

[00:35:59] **David Crabill:** So mochi has a really short shelf life, it sounds like, and that adds quite a bit of uh, challenges when it comes to building a sustainable business. So when you're going to a market, like how have you figured out like how much to make?

[00:36:17] **Susan Ting:** Yeah, it was definitely trial and error. I mean, again, this is my second year doing this farmer's market, so the first year doing it, it was definitely learning experience. I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't

know that, you know, when it rains it really affects such foot traffic, things like that. I just kind of like made up some numbers and just did it.

[00:36:36] So I kept all that record. I kept like a whole Excel sheet, how much I make, what the weather was like that day, like if I was a foot traffic, what sold, what didn't. So I have that to go back to. But second year in, I definitely have learned a lot more and also. I connected with the vendors that were there last year at the farmer's market and they, you know, some vendors have been there for five years or had been doing it for like five plus to 10 years and they gave me great tips, so I just kind of listened to them, learn a lot from them.

[00:37:07] And second year in it's definitely a lot better. But it's still, again, different markets, right? Different foot traffic, different days of the week, that also changes. So it really depends on the market themselves. But I think I have a better grasp now, but you're right, it is hard with my desserts because it's, definitely doesn't stay fresh for long or it wouldn't taste that good.

[00:37:29] I mean, you can still eat it a couple days, but it's just really tastes best the day off.

[00:37:33] **David Crabill:** So what is your prep schedule looking like when you are doing a market?

[00:37:40] **Susan Ting:** The cookies I can bake in advance or I can make the dough and freeze them, which helps before I bake them. So that helps a lot as well with my timing. But with all the batter that I have, I can make them at least two days in advance. So I would make all the batter two days before the market. The day before the market, I would basically prep all my supplies.

[00:38:02] I would bake my cookies then because they would stay fresh in a sealed package as well. So I can do that. But that's the only thing. And then the, that morning of the farmer's market, I would wake up. Depending, maybe four to five hours before the actual start of the market and start baking. So my market starts at nine.

[00:38:18] I think my last time, my market started at nine and I woke up at three 30. And I gotta tell you, I have not woken up at three 30 since like my babies were born. So it was really hard. But I, you know, you gotta do it. I want them fresh. I need them fresh, and they taste better that way anyway, so, but yeah, that's kind of what it looks like for market day.

[00:38:39] **David Crabill:** Well with products like the ones you're selling, like the ideal would be to do pre-orders, right? And to have it all set up. So you just make exactly what you need to make, how much of your business is events and pop-ups versus doing pre-orders.

[00:38:56] **Susan Ting:** You know, for now, I would say again, it's my second season in, so summer markets are really big for me. So pretty much every weekend I have a market. I planned out a market and they do really well. The pre-orders also do well. The holidays right? Always does well because everyone's ordering for the holidays.

[00:39:16] I will say my slowest time is definitely after the holidays, you know, new Year's resolution. People just kind of slow down. And I think it also, you know, I'm a home baker, so. My bakery is my home. You know, I don't necessarily have in brick and mortar. So I think that's also a little different. People don't see me, they don't walk into town and see a store.

[00:39:35] They can just walk into, like they have to think about pre-order. So I do have to market myself frequently, put myself out there, post as much as I can to kind of make sure people still, Hey, remember that I'm here. I still do better at markets than pre-orders, but again, depends on the season.

[00:39:51] **David Crabill:** Now, do you do sampling at markets?

[00:39:54] **Susan Ting:** I don't, I have to get a special permission for it or I have to do another step in with a health inspector in order for me to sell samples. So, you know, the first year I didn't do it. I think it was. I don't think they even had the option. This year decided, well, you know, hopefully it's the returning customers that are coming back, which actually many were returning customers.

[00:40:16] So I didn't really need to offer samples

[00:40:18] maybe I'll have like one customer that ask me, do you have any samples? I'll be like, no, I don't. But again, it's not, you know, stopping anyone else from really buying it and trying it

[00:40:29] **David Crabill:** Well, one thing I'll say is that just from the picture is like, your products look really good. Like, you seem to have a really good eye for design, which you said you're in hr, so it doesn't sound like it's necessarily in your corporate background. I mean, where does that come from?

[00:40:45] **Susan Ting:** Well, I actually went to college to study television and ended up with a concentration of video production. So that was my job to be creative. That was my studies. And then shortly after I graduated college, I worked in New York City and worked in TV as well.

[00:41:04] So again, that's kind of what I do. So I always had that. Kind of creativity in the background. You know, I just stumbled upon HR because, you know, they paid well. It was for the money, I did it for the money changing careers. When I moved to Bay Area, they didn't really have television production per se.

[00:41:24] Now they do, because now like Netflix and Facebook do their own, you know, productions as well. But when I moved there, there was nothing. So I had to kind of change careers so I can be in that city. And I stumbled upon hr. But definitely I would say that the video production background helped me with my design and my look of everything.

[00:41:44] **David Crabill:** So it sounds like you lost this sort of like creative element when you chose to go into hr. Did you feel like unfulfilled with your work? And if you did as like, has that come back?

[00:41:58] **Susan Ting:** I wouldn't say it's unfulfilled. I always knew I wanted to be working for people like, you know, hr is definitely helping people. It's, it's helping the employees of that company. It's working with them to kind of figure out solutions. So I always knew I wanna be in a job that enables me to do so as well.

[00:42:20] I'm a, I'm a people person, definitely. I'm definitely an extrovert. I get energy from people. So being in HR, I don't think I necessarily missed out on anything. It was just part of my path, right? Part of my career path that I needed to take. And then from then I found out that, well, maybe it's not forever.

[00:42:39] I don't have a problem changing careers. You know, I definitely have popped around and tried different things. I have no problem starting from the beginning. So, you know, it's just part of my journey. So definitely no regrets there. And now this is definitely something more to what I want to do. That probably gives me more joy because again, I'm using that side of my brain that I enjoy using, being creative.

[00:43:07] **David Crabill:** Well, it sounds like you definitely were able to take your HR background and it directly tied into this business.

[00:43:15] **Susan Ting:** That's true. I know. See, I have that, that could be the reason why I was there for a while. it's definitely useful. I would have to say having that background is definitely useful.

[00:43:24] **David Crabill:** Do you think that your interest in, you know, creativity and design, not just for creating the products, but also for marketing, taking pictures? Do you think that's why this business has done so well just a year's time?

[00:43:39] **Susan Ting:** I think it helped. I, I have to say I'm not a social media person. Like I don't really do social media before this. I have a personal page. I really updated it. I was forced, of course, you have to do what you gotta do as a business owner and the one person running the show, like, you know, I forced myself to get into it.

[00:44:03] I forced myself to take pictures and to, you know, it was definitely a lot of work. It was definitely a learning experience. I'm sure you scroll back to some of my pictures before versus now you know, how to edit these photos. Like it helped having that background. But Instagram, Facebook, all that stuff.

[00:44:22] I'm, I'm definitely, that's not my comfort zone. Definitely was it was a very interesting learning experience there.

[00:44:27] **David Crabill:** What would you recommend to somebody? Who is like social media is not really their realm, but it's kind of a necessary evil. Like you're you, you gotta do it. What have you learned or what would you recommend to somebody else who's jumping in and getting started?

[00:44:45] **Susan Ting:** Yeah, it's funny you say that. Um, Say just do it. I mean, I don't use a fancy camera or nothing. I use my phone, my good old iPhone 12 mini, like, it's not even like the latest phone and it works fine. Learn how to use your phone practice in front of natural light. So thank goodness for my big windows.

[00:45:08] Like I do take everything in front of it. It definitely helps with photos. I do minimal editing and, you know, it's just, Play around with it. You just have to do it. Play around and take those crappy pictures and eventually it will be better. You know, it will get better, but you do have to do it.

[00:45:26] And, and it's not always gonna be perfect in the beginning. It's still not like I'm still learning different ways. I'm still following. I love following other bakeries and other people who are influencers who only, you know, do



this for their living and I'm always inspired by them. So follow people who you think have the look that you want and be inspired by them as well.

[00:45:46] So continue to always learn that way was also really helpful. So of course I can't say that I do it perfectly with them, but you know, at least I have an idea of how I want it to look, so at least I can go about that way of creating the style that I want.

[00:46:01] **David Crabill:** Did you have any kind of like marketing or business experience before starting this?

[00:46:07] **Susan Ting:** Not whatsoever. I don't have a marketing degree or nothing like that. I never studied or worked in marketing. But yeah, I was just learning from scratch, learning what other people are doing and going from there. And, what's so great is that there also are people out there who wants to teach you tips and tricks.

[00:46:29] You know, so there's so many resources out there so many influencers and Instagram pages where, oh, you wanna start a home bakery? Or you want to take better pictures, like, follow me, you know? So again, so many resources, so much information out there that can teach you how to do this as well.

[00:46:47] **David Crabill:** What are some of the resources that you found particularly helpful?

[00:46:52] **Susan Ting:** I follow the local bakeries around me. I love them. We have a few like home bakers as well around me. So I'm always following their website. There is another website that I follow. She's a pretty small, she used to own a home bakery. It's called Just Bakecause.

[00:47:11] Um, I follow her sometimes. She gives good tips. There's another bakery called Pink Crumbs, I believe that's the name of it. She gives, again, tips and tricks on how to start a bakery. So those are like the resources that I just, you know, I just follow them and then they always kinda share tip of the day and I love it.

[00:47:30] And, and that's how I learn.

[00:47:32] **David Crabill:** Well, I wanted to ask you about your name and brand. Pretty unique, like how did you come up with the name?

[00:47:39] Susan Ting: so it's funny, it's, wish I have a better story, but I started another Instagram page called susan.everyday. So I started that page because again, I just quit my job. I have nothing to do. And I started to like share pictures of things I bake or what I'm doing to my home, like how I designing my new home because I just moved to my first house ever.

[00:48:01] And you know, I started that page and I was like trying to think of names and I was like, oh my goodness, like I don't wanna name my bakery after myself. No. Like, I don't wanna name it after my children, kind of. But no, like, and then I think I was thinking like, why don't you just name it Susan Everyday Bake Shop or something, or Bakery or like Susan Everyday Bakery.

[00:48:22] And I was like, well okay, I don't want my name in there, but Everyday Bake Shop has a ring to it. So that kind of just stuck. And I love the word everyday because Instead of just buying a good old brownie, like I want mochi donuts and mochi muffins to be a norm.

[00:48:39] So I love that it could be shared every day and or part of like every day's life kind of thing. I don't know. That's how I thought about it and it kind of works.

[00:48:48] **David Crabill:** Well, also, one thing I noticed with your like logo and just like the look of your brand, it's so simple. I mean it's exceedingly simple and minimalistic, but it also is intentionally that way. Like how did you decide to like go with this like extreme minimalist brand?

[00:49:12] **Susan Ting:** Yeah, so I would have to thank my husband who is actually a designer. He, he actually built my website and he made my logo. I didn't know where I wanted to do with it. I don't wanna put a pictures on it. Like I didn't, nothing was really popping up to me at that time. Because I know, like when you look at bakeries and the logos, it's really cute.

[00:49:35] There's a picture of a cupcake or cookie or whisk, and I was like, that's really adorable. But nothing really kind of stood out to me because, you know, how do I represent mochi? Like, that was my focus in the beginning, just mochis, like, how do I represent mochi? I just couldn't find anything. So my husband created this logo for me.

[00:49:52] I said, I want it simple and I wanted these colors. That's all I knew. Black and pink, you know, light pink. And he made it, and it kind of stuck. And I like it too. Like I, I think I like that it's minimalist. I, I like that it's not that distracting. And it could be, you know, anything, it, it could give me an

opportunity to kind of, you know, make other things like cookies and not just mochi treats,

[00:50:16] **David Crabill:** Well, as you think back on the past year plus, like what has the progression been like and has anything surprised you?

[00:50:26] **Susan Ting:** you know, I would definitely say that it's been a very organic growth. It's not like fast paced. I'm not always selling out or have crazy big orders, but it's been very like, subtle and it, it's been growing steadily and I think. That was what I expected. I mean, sure, I wish that it would totally hit right off the bat and, you know, everyone will love myself and everyone will want it, and I'll be like, sorted out every weekend.

[00:50:55] But it's not that. And I, it's great in a sense because I am learning along the way. So I am, again, slowly learning. I'm learning every day. I'm learning every month on how to always improve and, and make this better. I don't think there's any major surprises per se. would say the hardest part is definitely connecting. I think it's always important to continue your networking and how do I go about doing that as a home baker? So that's a, that's like a little struggle for me right now is to put myself out there. And again, nothing, nothing too surprising so far.

[00:51:31] **David Crabill:** Have there been points where you doubted yourself or wondered if this is a business that you should keep on doing?

[00:51:39] **Susan Ting:** All the time. Every month. every month, I'll be like, maybe I should go back to corporate. Maybe this is not gonna work. But it's only been roughly a year. I, I, I mean, I don't know what to expect, but I also have to be really realistic with my goals. But sometimes I do wonder like, am I not doing enough?

[00:51:58] Should I do more? Like, how can I put myself out there? Like where's the next step for me? Where should I be selling? Is it sustainable? How do I take care of my family? That's, Always on top of my head, you know, my family is the most important part of me and I wanna take care of them. I'm definitely always been taking care of others type of person.

[00:52:19] I've been working my entire life. I've been working since I was 14, you know, so it's definitely, you know, hard in that sense. But so far, you know, it is what it is. And again, I'm taking one day at a time, one market at a time, and we'll see where it goes. Things could totally change in a year, but for now, I'm having fun.

[00:52:38] This business has given me so much joy, meeting new people, customers being able to create. It's definitely I am doing right now and what I enjoy doing right now. So,

[00:52:47] **David Crabill:** I believe that Massachusetts allows you to sell wholesale. Is that something that you've looked into?

[00:52:55] **Susan Ting:** this year I started thinking about that and what does that mean? So I do have to reach out. My town doesn't necessarily have anything to do with it. It's actually the state of Massachusetts. I think that's something where I can still keep my residential permit for wholesale, but I don't know what that stuff entails.

[00:53:13] So I do have to do more research, but I mean, I could rent out a commercial kitchen, right, and go the wholesale route, but I don't think I'm there either yet. I don't think I'm that big yet, and I can sell that much yet. So, but yeah, that would be the next step that I would have to do a little bit more Research this year.

[00:53:30] **David Crabill:** Well, as you look forward, where would you like this business to go in the next year or more?

[00:53:38] **Susan Ting:** That's a great question and I wish I have a definite, I know where I wanna be, but I, I'm just taking in a day at a time, to be honest. I know I don't wanna open a brick and mortar per se. I kinda like them able again, to have the flexibility to work out my home without, you know, the expenses when you own a brick and mortar.

[00:53:58] That's been really nice. I would definitely wanna collaborate more with other businesses. Maybe I do have to look into wholesale, what does that mean? But definitely the collaboration part with maybe popping up in like other stores, coffee shops being to work with others around my community.

[00:54:18] I would love to start doing that. That would be really fun to put myself out there and to engage with the community. And again, I don't know exactly what that means, but I don't know. I'm gonna, see what happens.

[00:54:32] **David Crabill:** Well, what keeps you going? Like, what drives you forward and why do you love this business?

[00:54:38] **Susan Ting:** I love this business because I love sharing what I make. I think food is love. That's kind of how I grew up, you know, in my family it's

always, have you eaten? Are you hungry? You know, and so I love you. It's, it's food is love and, and I love that story. So that's kind of what I'm sharing my love the food that I would want to feed my children and my family and to show people, what mochi is.

[00:55:06] They're teaching others about this type of big goods. I love being able to do that. So that definitely motivates me is to kind of sharing these treats with those who might not be familiar with mochi. again, to also be able to offer gluten-free options or dairy-free options to those who need them.

[00:55:27] You know? So that's why I'm here and, and being part of this community means for me right now, and that is definitely a big motivator.

[00:55:35] **David Crabill:** Well, it's awesome to see where you come in just a short year's time, and I'm definitely looking forward to see where your business goes in the future. Now, if anybody would like to learn more about your business, how can they find you and reach out?

[00:55:50] **Susan Ting:** If people want to reach me, you can email me at [hello@everydaybakeshop.com](mailto:hello@everydaybakeshop.com). You can check up my website and order through my website at [everydaybakeshop.com](http://everydaybakeshop.com) as well. I also have an Instagram page and a Facebook page. My Instagram handle is [@everyday.bakeshop](https://www.instagram.com/everyday.bakeshop) so you can also see what I'm up to.

[00:56:13] I always update where I'm at, what market popups I'm doing and everything else.

[00:56:18] **David Crabill:** Great. Well, thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today.

[00:56:22] **Susan Ting:** Thank you David.

[00:56:24] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager Podcast.

[00:56:29] For more information about this episode, go to [forrager.com/podcast/94](http://forrager.com/podcast/94)

[00:56:36] 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 will help others like you find this podcast.

[00:56:48] And finally, if you're thinking about selling your own homemade food, check out my free mini course where I walk you through the steps you need to take to get a cottage food business off the ground to get the course, go to [cottagefoodcourse.com](http://cottagefoodcourse.com).

[00:56:59] Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.