

Deanna Martinez-Bey with The Fiery Whisk Bakery

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 Deanna Martinez-Bey.

[00:00:11] But first, are you building an email list for your business yet? If not, you really should be collecting customers email addresses and emailing them on a regular basis. Even these days, email continues to be better than social media for generating consistent sales and the best part is that you own it. Once you build an email list, nobody can take it away from you. I personally use ConvertKit to manage email for my fudge business and I created a free tutorial that will walk you through how to set up a free email marketing system for your business in less than one hour. So to learn more, you can go to forrager.com/email.

[00:00:47] All right, so I have Deanna Martinez-Bey on the show today. Deanna lives in Wake Forest, North Carolina and sells sweetbreads and other baked goods with her cottage food business, The Fiery Whisk. Deanna has been a certified cottage food business for 14 years, so she's had her hand in almost every aspect of being a cottage food baker, but her passion for food extends well beyond her cottage food business.

[00:01:10] Deanna is a published author, food blogger, podcaster, and recipe creator. She runs her own food blog, has written numerous books, hosts a couple of podcasts, and has had recipes featured in Taste of Home Women's Day, and three Gooseberry Patch Cookbooks

[00:01:25] And on top of all of that, she runs a Facebook group for bakers that has over 10, 000 members. In this episode, Deanna shares tips on running your own pop up events, advertising on social media, Leveraging other types of published media, and more.

[00:01:42] And with that, let's jump right into this episode.

[00:01:46] Welcome to the show Deanna, nice to have you here.

[00:01:49] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Hey, David. Thank you so much. It's an honor for me to be here today.

[00:01:53] **David Crabill:** So, Deanna, can you take me back? I know it's been a long time that you've been doing this. How did this all get started?

[00:02:02] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** So, as with most bakers, it all started when I was little. my mom used to bake a lot around the holidays. Christmas time in particular. I grew up in New Jersey and my family is Italian, so we always had like this huge feast on Christmas Eve and it was called the Feast of the Seven Fishes.

[00:02:25] It's just like an Italian tradition and we would have like all the seafood, but the Star of the night were the desserts and. we used to prepare for, like, days in advance, and I was always, always, like, stuck to my mom like glue. She would teach me how to bake cookies and cheesecakes. She had the most amazing New York style cheesecake recipe you could ever, ever taste.

[00:02:50] And so that's where it all began, like, when I was a very young girl. I fell in love with baking.

[00:02:57] **David Crabill:** So, how long ago was it that you actually got certified in your state?

[00:03:04] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** The first time was in 2009 and the name of my bakery at that time was different than what it is now. I also lived in a different dwelling and here in North Carolina when you move to a new, a new home you have to have your new kitchen re-certified.

[00:03:24] It's like the certification doesn't carry over from dwelling to dwelling, right? In 2015, I revamped my bakery and since, you know, I had moved into a new home and I had to have the kitchen re-certified anyway, I went ahead and revamped. Did the new logo, changed the name to what it is now, which is the Fiery Whisk Bakery. And I was sitting on my bed one night, and I was trying to come up with names for the new bakery. And I knew I wanted to have the name Whisk so I was thinking things like, the Whisk, or, you know, just anything. I had like a list of different names with the word whisk in it. My husband came up and I read through the names.

[00:04:05] I'm like, do any of these sound good? And he paused for a moment and he says, I've got it. He's like, The Fiery Whisk. Because you're fiery. And I

was like, perfect. That is perfect. And that's how the name of my bakery came about.

[00:04:19] **David Crabill:** So you rebranded like five, six years after you actually started. So if we go back to like when you initially got your first certification, what were your ambitions at that time? Like what prompted you to get certified and start this business?

[00:04:34] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** So, what I would do is, I would always bake for events and holidays, birthdays. Like, my gift to people was always something that I baked in the kitchen. So, I had a neighbor friend she actually had lived in the same cul de sac as I did. The first time I had the bakery certified and she said to me one day, she's like, Deanna, why don't you bake your goods and sell them?

[00:04:58] And it just had never occurred to me because I was just giving them, you know? And so I started looking into it and. Back then, it was pretty easy to, become a certified cottage bakery, and so I just went all in, and I did it. And, a big part of it was, of course, to, at the time, I was homeschooling my son, and so I would host, like fundraisers for our school to help with school things.

[00:05:23] And that's how it started, but then it grew. And I started selling at a local farmer's market and people were placing orders for, you know, cookies and different things. And it just kind of started to take off. It was, it was a slow process, but once I started selling my goods at the farmer's market, I have to say that that did help pick up business.

[00:05:47] **David Crabill:** So at this time, were you like, Setting your sights on going commercial eventually or like getting a brick and mortar. what were you thinking at that time?

[00:05:59] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** I'll be honest with you. I was not thinking that far in advance at that time. At that time I was just thinking, this is great. I am doing what I love as a way for me to bring in some extra income. Just doing what I love to make some extra money. It wasn't until recently that I've given thought to a brick and mortar.

[00:06:20] But the local community college here has a board of, I guess you could say like business advisors and they give like free advice to new business owners or Like an entrepreneur who's thinking about going into business. And so I actually sat down and had an appointment with one of the advisors on moving forward to starting a brick and mortar.

[00:06:42] And I devised a business plan and then. Life kind of happens, and at the time that I was doing all of that, I was a pastry chef at a local country club, and I was laid off from my job, so I had to set aside the idea of opening a brick and mortar but I knew I wanted to keep baking, but I'm also a hairdresser, so I had to go back to work full time doing hair.

[00:07:14] And it was becoming harder and harder to take orders, find the time to bake them, and meet my clients for delivery. So, I decided that rather than take orders, I was going to set up events for myself. This way I was in charge, so to say, of when I would be baking and how much I would be baking and things like that.

[00:07:36] And that's the avenue that I'm traveling down right now.

[00:07:41] **David Crabill:** So if we go back, I mean, it sounds like you started very organically in 2009, 2010, grew your business slowly. You were a mom and then you moved and decided to Revamp your certification, rebrand yourself. So, was that a transition point in the business or did you just sort of keep going where you had left off?

[00:08:06] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** That's a great question. No, it was definitely a transition point because the reason for the move was I was starting my life over again. So, I was a single mom for a while, and when I was a single mom My son and I were living in an apartment and here in North Carolina, you need to have like a home.

[00:08:26] I couldn't legally bake from the apartment at the time, so I had to set baking aside. So when I moved into my new home in yeah the end of, I just started the bakery. Back again, and like I said, revamped it. So it was definitely a transition period, so to say, because there was some time in there where I couldn't bake and sell.

[00:08:50] **David Crabill:** Now, you are the first person from North Carolina that's been on my podcast and North Carolina is kind of a unique state when it comes to how their whole law works. I mean, it's not actually technically a law, but I guess how their rules work. So, can you just describe a little bit about yourself? What you actually have to do to get certified in North Carolina.

[00:09:10] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** So basically, the Department of Agriculture, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, is who we have to go through in order to have our kitchen certified. So a representative comes out and they inspect the kitchen. and the closest restroom to make sure that there's hot water.

[00:09:30] they went through the pantry to make sure that I had my baking items separate from my home items. And they went through the refrigerator and did the same thing. There has to be a shelf or more dedicated to just baking. And so basically everything for baking in the refrigerator in the Items for home use.

[00:09:51] Uh, They went through, like, the drawers with a flashlight and checked for crumbs and cleanliness. it was a little intense, but I did pass and I was, you know, certified.

[00:10:06] **David Crabill:** That actually is quite a bit more intense than most inspections are. Usually it's, it's super easy. So it sounds like it, you actually had to be prepared that time.

[00:10:16] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Oh, yes, I had to be prepared and the good thing is that we were able to set a day in time. So I knew that they were coming and when they were coming. So, of course, I was like a crazy lunatic for the week before. Scrubbing, not that my house was messy, but you know, I wasn't exactly sure what they were going to be looking for.

[00:10:36] So I just didn't want them to find Anything that made them unhappy. like the whole week before I was just like deep cleaning and you know, making sure that everything was in order, you know, the, the drawers and the cabinets and just everything. But I guess you could say it was a success.

[00:10:53] **David Crabill:** And do you have to get reinspected each year?

[00:10:58] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** We do not. The only time, like I said, that I would have to get inspected again is if I were to move and I was baking from a different kitchen.

[00:11:07] **David Crabill:** So. Taking it back to when you first started your business what were you actually selling at the time and has that changed over time?

[00:11:16] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Yeah, you know, it has changed. Over time, so when I first started, of course, I had a lot of like family recipes, I would do like cookies and brownies. I would even do some cakes, which I don't do anymore. I don't do cakes. I'm not a decorator, David, by any means. It's just not my gift.

[00:11:34] I can bake up something delicious, but when it comes to decorating, eh, not so much. Um... And, of course, that's something that I learned the hard way but as time went on, I have, like, I guess you could say a new specialty over the years, and one of my specialties are my sweetbreads. And when I say sweetbreads, a lot of times people ask me, like, well, what exactly do you mean?

[00:11:59] Banana breads, pumpkin breads. blueberry, lemon, things like that. And I've come up with a recipe. It's been years now. they're all made completely from scratch. And I make my mix for the sweetbreads in a huge bowl. And I keep it in the fridge. And then whenever I need to make sweetbreads, it's ready for me. It's, it's available. I always have it. I always have some in the fridge. So that's one of my biggest sellers right now are my sweetbreads. I have a multitude of variations. I also do cookies. Cookie platters at Christmas time are huge.

[00:12:35] I make hundreds and hundreds of cookies, all different kinds, and then I create platters. And I sell the platters and I sell out every year. So that's something that has changed. And of course, you know, as the years go by, I always revamp the menu. Things that I haven't sold in a long time, I'll remove and then I'll try adding new things to see how they do.

[00:12:59] Right now, like, chocolate covered treats. are really big here, still with the hot cocoa bombs once the weather cools off. Things like that, fudge, chocolate covered Oreos chocolate covered apple slices, things like that. Chocolate covered treats are really big. So I try to keep the items that are my bestsellers and then I'll try and incorporate new things because that could become a bestseller one day.

[00:13:24] **David Crabill:** Yeah, sweetbreads is a pretty unique niche, right? I mean, and obviously a lot of people sell banana bread or sell pumpkin bread, but it seems like you have sort of taken it to another level. Can you explain a little bit more about like, what are the flavors that you sell?

[00:13:39] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** yes, I've taken it to another level. My, my husband really, really wants me to sell my sweetbreads, commercially. But, the way that I have it right now, I don't have any, like, chemicals or, you know, anything like that. To give them a longer shelf life.

[00:13:57] So it's something that we have to really look into and study to make happen. But some of my flavors, of course, you've got your basic flavors like banana, banana nut, banana chocolate chip. I also have things like banana coffee

chocolate chip or banana chia seed. I've got pumpkin. Again, the whole, the whole list.

[00:14:17] Pumpkin, pumpkin chocolate chip, pumpkin nut. We could even do pumpkin coffee, believe it or not. That's a decent combination. I've got blueberry lemon. That's one of the big sellers. And then with the holidays coming up, I do things like banana, cinnamon raisin, and cranberry nut. That's a big one, you know, with the holidays coming up.

[00:14:37] So, I'm always trying to get creative and try new flavors. Something that I do want to try is like a carrot cake sweetbread or a carrot sweetbread. I haven't tried it yet, but that's something that I'm looking into and trying to come up with a recipe for.

[00:14:52] **David Crabill:** Did you like choose this niche or did it sort of choose you? Like how did you end up landing on sweetbreads as being your main item?

[00:15:01] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** I think it found me. Because it all started just with this particular like mix that I make. And I've taught like baking classes on zoom and things like that.

[00:15:14] And this is just one recipe that I will not share because it just started out, like I said, as your basic, like, banana bread, and then it just grew and grew, and I would try different flavors, and I would, like, bring samples to work wherever I was working at the time, and, get people's honest opinions.

[00:15:34] So the flavors that I currently have on the menu are all flavors that people have told me that they truly love. And they must, because they order them time and time again.

[00:15:46] **David Crabill:** Well, that's so interesting to hear that you don't share this recipe because of all the guests I've had, I think you're probably the one that has shared recipes the most. And we can elaborate on that a little bit about how extensively you shared recipes. But I mean, what are your thoughts about that?

[00:16:01] I guess, in terms of, whether to share or not share, like, how important is it to keep a recipe a secret?

[00:16:08] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Well, the thing is, yes, I'm pretty much an open book. I have a food blog deannasrecipebox.com, where I have shared recipes. And then prior to that, I had a food blog since like 2009, where I was

sharing recipes. If someone asks me for a recipe, I will share the recipe with them. Like I said, I taught Zoom baking classes for a while.

[00:16:31] I love just sharing my recipes with people, but there's only two recipes that I won't share. And this is one of them because, you know, my husband and I do talk about turning it into something bigger in the future, maybe something commercial or, you know, starting a brick and mortar and having these breads, you know, as a staple.

[00:16:50] And the other recipe that I won't share is my mom's New York style cheesecake recipe. Just because my mom has passed away, and it's something that I have of hers, and that one I just won't share either.

[00:17:05] **David Crabill:** Well, can you talk a little bit more about, where you have shared your recipes? I know you've been featured in some major publications, like um, you've even won some contests, I think.

[00:17:17] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** I won a contest with Taste of Home magazine for my mascarpone cheesecake recipe. So, that recipe was printed in one of their magazines and in four of their best of cookbooks. I've also had several cookie recipes featured in Gooseberry Patch cookbooks. And, I am online. I've been on Woman's Day.

[00:17:41] com. There's a, some local blogs, like local food blogs, like Love of Food, that has featured my recipes on their website. there's probably a couple that I'm missing, but in addition to just sharing my recipes, I'm also an author and a food writer. So I've had Recipes featured in many magazines, some local and some national that I've written as an a freelance food writer.

[00:18:06] I currently have a column in Pastry Arts Magazine. It's called Cottage Life. And so, it's geared towards cottage bakers. And that has been a ton of fun. To write. I've had the column for about two years now. And I also had a column for about a year in Writer's Digest magazine where I wrote about food writing.

[00:18:31] **David Crabill:** So clearly food is a big part of your life. I mean, it extends well beyond this cottage food business. So, what's the goal with your writing? Is it another way to make money? Is it just an outlet for creativity? I mean, what is it that drives you to, seek opportunities to share this information with others.

[00:18:55] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** I am definitely a creative person. Everything that I do requires some amount of creativity. From doing hair, to baking, to writing. And the purpose of my writing is to help and or inspire people and I've got 16 published books right now. are novellas and I have four cookbooks that I've written about baking.

[00:19:19] The first one I wrote was The Ultimate Guide to Cheesecakes. And I wrote that because of my love and affection for cheesecakes. It's my absolute favorite dessert. And then it just grew into a series. So it started with The Ultimate Guide to Cheesecakes, and then the next one was The Ultimate Guide to Cookies.

[00:19:39] Following that was the Ultimate Guide to Easy Desserts, and then the last one I wrote was the Ultimate Guide to Pies. And each book contains tips and tricks to making those things well, and then the books also include recipes. And I love to write because... I want my writing to help someone in one way, shape, or form.

[00:20:01] If it's just finding a recipe, great. If it's one of my novellas, my novellas are like happily ever after typically type books. And so, they also have a thread of food running through them. So at the end of each of my novellas, I include recipes from the story. So there's always food running through, any of my books that you pick up.

[00:20:25] So it's all about baking and writing, I guess you could say.

[00:20:29] **David Crabill:** I'm just thinking about, like, a lot of people who start cottage food businesses are obviously very passionate about food and may be interested in another way to monetize their passion. Have you found that running a food blog or publishing books or writing for various publications, is that...

[00:20:49] Something you'd recommend to someone for potentially boosting their income?

[00:20:54] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Yes, actually. The food blog, that's gonna take a lot of time. That's definitely not something that'll start generating income, like, in 30 days. At least not in my experience. But as far as freelance writing for magazines and websites, absolutely. That is an amazing way to increase your income. So when I started out as an author, I was working with a publishing company. So the first three novels that I wrote was under the umbrella of a publishing company. After the third novel, I decided I was going

to come out from underneath that umbrella and become a complete independent author that we call them indie authors.

[00:21:36] And that means you do everything yourself from writing the books to having them edited to book covers, to uploading them, to sell, you just do everything. On your own. in my personal opinion, I found that being an indie author, I make more money than I did when I was working with the publishing company.

[00:21:54] Now, mind you, the publishing company that I was working with was not one of these, you know, big, huge publishing companies because I was just getting started. It was just a little independent company, But I would say if someone is looking to make immediate money writing about food, that freelance writing is definitely the way to go.

[00:22:15] **David Crabill:** So one aspect of it would be to potentially directly monetize by freelancing for another company. But the other side of it would be whether that opportunity actually comes back around and helps market your food business, right? Like, have you seen that... When you publish books or when you write for other publications, has that helped boost your food business or does it really not affect it too much?

[00:22:43] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Yes and no. Now with the column that I have for Pastry Arts Magazine, I can reach out to them and say, Hey, would you mind sharing something about me on your Instagram channel, and they will, and they've got hundreds of thousands of followers. And so, there's been times where they have shared something for me about my food blog or my books, and yes, when that happens, I do see an uprise in whatever it was that they were sharing for me.

[00:23:09] The podcast that I have is... Pretty successful in as far as getting the word about my business and my brand out to the world. I find that the podcast probably brings me more business than the publications, if that makes sense.

[00:23:27] **David Crabill:** That's actually a little surprising for me to hear because I mean, obviously I run a podcast and I feel like it's so hard to discover podcasts, you know, maybe it happens through word of mouth, but do you find that people are actually finding your podcast somehow?

[00:23:42] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Yeah, well, you know, during, I hate to even talk about this, but during the whole pandemic thing, I was home, and I started doing social media management for authors and foodies, so I did that as

a way to bring in people some extra income through that time period. And so I learned a lot about social media management and I take what I learned and I use that for my podcast, for my books for my bakery.

[00:24:11] And each one of those areas has its own channels. On Instagram, Facebook, TikTok. they all have their own because in my mind someone who's interested in reading books may not be interested in baking or you know, someone local is going to be more interested in my bakery than someone, in New Jersey.

[00:24:36] So they all have their own channels and so I network appropriately and that has really helped get the word out about all these different things that I do.

[00:24:48] **David Crabill:** So it sounds like you're doing a lot of your own marketing through your own social media knowledge and everything to bring people to your podcast or to your business. so can you share a little bit about what you've learned? You were a social media manager. What are some of your social media tips?

[00:25:03] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Well, you know what? They change monthly Because you know all the algorithms and the different, you know, they change constantly So it's key to do your research and keep up with them. But for the most part My cottage bakery, when I'm working on growing that channel, I work on that locally.

[00:25:26] So if you're a cottage baker, you want to follow other local businesses and build relationships with them, like on your Instagram channel. Even, you know, it's easiest on Instagram to build locally. So my advice is to only build Local following on your cottage baking channels. Now on my author channel, of course, that doesn't have to be local because anybody can buy my books from Amazon and, you know, have them shipped or downloaded to their device. So another good piece of advice would be when you're building your following to build relationships. Because you really can't just pop in and out and not post regularly or communicate when people comment on your posts, you know, answer them. It's very important especially for a cottage bakery, to build that following.

[00:26:23] And then you want to build relationships with other local businesses because you guys can work together. For example... fell in love with the owner of Savory Spice Shop here in Raleigh. She's a sweetheart and we just hit it off and she has, you know, offered me opportunities to go and sell my baked goods

[00:26:45] at her shop, but it was because of the relationship that we built that she offered that to me. Otherwise, it never would have happened. So relationships are just super important. I don't think I could say that enough.

[00:26:58] **David Crabill:** So this concept of running a pop up in another business, obviously leveraging their customer base. What have you learned about that? Is that the only time you've done that or have you sought those opportunities elsewhere as well?

[00:27:11] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** I've done a few of them, and I mean, the key is, again, to make sure that the business that you're going to be, you know, setting up within, that they're sharing you on their social platforms. And then for me, it's, it's important for me to share that I'm going to be there. So I'm essentially sharing about their business on my social platforms.

[00:27:32] And it's a win win.

[00:27:34] **David Crabill:** Is there anything that you've learned about running those pop up events of like? When to go, time of day uh, certain days of the week, or how long you're there. Do you treat it any differently than you would like a farmer's market?

[00:27:50] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** It's very similar to a farmer's market. But the thing is, when I do these pop up events, a lot of times the business owners will say, Hey, can you come between this time and this time? And of course I will, I'll agree, but if I sell out before the ending time, I'm not going to sit there. I'm going to pack up and, head out.

[00:28:09] So I think it's important to speak with the business owner to see what type of foot traffic that they're planning on having. The day that they've invited you or the day that you've agreed upon. I find that Saturdays are a fantastic day to, you know, set up. But again, it depends on the business. So for me to set up in the spice shop, their busiest day of the week is going to be like a Saturday.

[00:28:33] So that's going to work out best. And I've done other pop up events, like one was in a gift shop and They wanted me to be there more around lunch rush because there was restaurants in the area. So they felt like if I was there during lunch, when people were having lunch at the restaurants, they would see our signage and our balloons and stuff and come in and buy stuff.

[00:28:53] And it worked. So I think key also is, David, is to communicate with the business owner prior to a pop up because You want to find out what their

busiest days are, what the busiest times, you know, are during that day and, you know, schedule yourself to be there during those times.

[00:29:13] **David Crabill:** And is there something that the business gets out of it? Do you give them a cut of sales or something like that?

[00:29:20] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Yes. Some businesses want like a flat fee. Others want a percentage of your sales. Some Just because, you know, you're bringing more business into their establishment, some may choose not to charge you anything at all. I've had that happen, and when that happens, I give things to the employees at the establishment.

[00:29:41] Like, I'll give them, you know, whatever they want from the table as a thank you. but different businesses are going to require different things. So I can take my own payments.

[00:29:51] I have a payment options where I can take credit cards and things like that. So some, Businesses will want you to take care of all of that on your own. And then other businesses I have found will say, you know what, the customers can purchase your items and we, we will ring up the transactions.

[00:30:10] And typically when that happens, they're making a percentage of my sales. So it allows them to keep up with what I'm selling so that they can get the correct percentage.

[00:30:20] **David Crabill:** in that case when they're handling the payment, that'd probably only be allowed in states which allow wholesale, which I know North Carolina does allow wholesale. Have you... Explored other wholesale opportunities? Have you just put your products in stores without you personally being there?

[00:30:36] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Yes. Yes, I have. there was a place in Raleigh who purchased a lot of my items and sold them, but it was right before COVID. So. Once that happened and everything kind of shut down, I didn't pursue it any longer. But yes, I did give it a go. I mean, I don't know how well it did because what it is is I gave them like a discounted price. They purchased the items from me and then they upped the prices and sold them in the store. So that is definitely something that can be done here. But again, just because of where I'm at in my life right now, it's really hard for me to take any type of orders.

[00:31:19] And bake them and meet for delivery. So right now it's the easiest thing for me is to schedule pop up bakeries. This way I can create a schedule that'll you know, so that I can do them.

[00:31:32] **David Crabill:** So you've done the pop ups in businesses. What are some of the other ways that you've gotten your products out there to customers?

[00:31:42] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Well, you can also do what we call porch pop ups and it's kind of like a yard sale, so to say, and you sell your baked goods. Like you could set up in your driveway or in your garage. Of course you have to make sure that. It's acceptable, you know, where you live to do that. And also something that I would like to add is some towns and cities do require, you know, licensing.

[00:32:06] So make sure you look into... You know, what is needed before just going and setting up a porch pop up. But I did a porch pop up last October, I think it was, and it went fantastic. The key to a successful porch pop up is to start networking it on social media, through your email lists, through texting, through whatever avenue that you can at least, you know, a couple of weeks in advance.

[00:32:35] This way people are aware of it. Another great way to network is through Nextdoor. basically it's like, it's a neighborhood website. And you can go and you can ask questions, or you know, you can post events and things like that.

[00:32:49] And that's another great avenue to share your bakery.

[00:32:53] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I saw you did a whole podcast episode on doing a porch pop up. It seems like you, used a lot more strategy in running your porch pop ups than most people do when they just, sell and say, you got to pick up for my porch. So can you walk me through some of the things that you did to make that particularly successful?

[00:33:12] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Yeah, sure. like I said You want to make sure that you network it at least a couple weeks in advance. any way that you can. Another great way is to reach out to past customers. A lot of times I'll have people reach out to me through messenger, so I never delete those messages. And so anybody who has reached out to me about the bakery, I share with them when I'm doing a pop up bakery, a porch pop up, whatever I'm doing, I make sure that I share it with them.

[00:33:44] So that's key, reaching out to your Past customers networking on social. You can also reach out to local businesses and ask if you could leave like a flyer at their register and then in return ask them for some of their business cards to set up at your pop up, or your porch pop up, and it's a win win.

[00:34:06] So, they're networking your porch pop up for you and then when people come to the porch pop up, you've got business cards for local businesses. that have shown support. So it's like you're scratching one another's back, so to say. So condensing your menu, only selling, you know, your best sellers networking, and then of course, you know, your setup.

[00:34:28] So the way that I set up, I have a couple of tables. I always make sure I have tablecloths. I'll have a chair, you know, for myself, because you're going to be out there for a few hours. I have labels. Logo labels that I put on everything. So everything looks cohesive, everything has a label.

[00:34:46] And then of course you've got your food labels, but I always put those at the bottom so that you can't see it when you're shopping. I have racks and platters, different things like that that I'll set up this way. It's inviting, when people, you know, see your setup.

[00:35:02] It looks nice. It, you know, and they, they want to come and take a look at what you've got. I usually put a sign down by the mailbox and tie a balloon to it so people know this is the house that they need to go to. And the last time I had a cookie decorating station for kids and the way that I advertised it was each child can decorate one sugar cookie with purchase.

[00:35:22] And then my daughter actually stood at the table and kind of, I let her take control over that part of the, of the pop up and she loved it.

[00:35:31] **David Crabill:** And in terms of getting a word out about this, do you use email at all as well?

[00:35:38] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Yes, I do have an email list for local customers. again, I'm not going to take my entire, email list that I've got for my food blog and send them information about My porch pop up because they're all over the place. You know what I mean? So I have a specific list for local customers, and I've created that by asking people when they place an order if I could have their email address to add, to my email list and I explain I am only going to send out emails when I have like events going on or the holidays specials and things like that and 99 percent of people say sure and they give you their email address.

[00:36:19] So I Send an email. I network on social I send texts to people Whether they're customers or maybe you know parents of my daughter's friends, then I use the next door site as well to draw in like, local people in my town. The last time, when I did the porch pop up, the mail lady was coming to deliver mail and she saw me and she got out of her mail truck and she came and she bought several items.

[00:36:49] I didn't expect that at all. And I thought that was kind of funny. So we haven't talked about pricing yet, and um, I don't think I've had anybody on the podcast who's really specialized in sweetbread, so how have you come up with your pricing and has it changed over time?

[00:37:08] Yes, it has. And what I use now... It's called CakeCost and it's a free app where you can plug in your recipe and it tells you how much it costs you to make that per item and how much it costs per serving. So, leading up until like the past year that I've started using this app, I just, Wrote it by hand, you know, how much for flour, how much for butter, you know what I mean?

[00:37:33] And then calculated how much I was using to come up with the cost of the sweetbreads. So when I started making the sweetbreads, they were 5 a loaf. Now mind you, I do make them in regular size loaf pans, but it's not a four inch high loaf, like white bread would be, so to say, David. It's like, it's sweet bread, so it's more condensed.

[00:37:56] And rather than being, you know, baking up to the top of the pan, each loaf is approximately two inches high. And so I started selling them for five dollars, and then, you know, as time goes on, they've gone up. Right now, they're at seven, but I hate to say this, but with the cost of butter right now, I may have to bring it up to 8 a loaf, which in my mind is still really, it's still affordable because you're getting, you know, an entire loaf and, you know, there's no chemicals or harmful ingredients in there.

[00:38:28] And I do use like farm fresh eggs, you know, quality ingredient. N no one has ever said to me, Oh, 7 a loaf. That's high. I've never heard that. But I'm going to have to reevaluate. The cost of my supplies to see if I need to bump it up to eight or not, but right now they're still at seven,

[00:38:46] **David Crabill:** So you haven't experimented with higher pricing to see what the market would bear?

[00:38:52] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** not on the sweetbreads, just because I know what they cost me to make. And I'm not using like anything packaged, so to say.

So it's made completely, you know, from scratch. A lot of times, Using things like, say, if I'm doing chocolate covered Oreos or whatever, I gotta buy them. I gotta buy the Oreos.

[00:39:10] And so I consider that, like, as a packaged item which is gonna up the cost. So, probably the most expensive thing in the sweetbreads is the butter right now. So no, I've not experienced with higher pricing myself. But some of my other items or...

[00:39:26] 20. You know, depending on the cookie, cause you've got, everything in there, the chocolate chips, the butter, you know, everything, you know, everything. So some of the items that I sell are higher in price, but the sweetbreads are very, very affordable and super tasty.

[00:39:43] **David Crabill:** Now, when you do these pop ups or markets, are you sampling? **Are you offering samples?**

[00:39:52] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** I do. And let me tell you why, because I've tried it both ways. So I've tried to sell the sweetbreads without samples. And they'll do okay. But I tell you what, when I put those little sample cups out there, where people can try it, 95% of the time, after tasting it, they're buying a sweet bread.

[00:40:13] So, in my opinion, for what I'm selling, and in my area, yep, samples all the way. even when I do a pop up bakery, or a porch pop up, or whatever I'm doing, I'm offering samples. Because they sell it for you. I don't even have to do any selling when someone has a bite. They're like, oh, wow, how much are these?

[00:40:36] And then they'll buy one or two.

[00:40:38] **David Crabill:** I'm just thinking about all that you do, right? You run this business, you also run at least one podcast and a food blog, and you write for other publications, and you're a hairdresser, and, you know, for all of the things that you manage, you have, like, Separate social media accounts for all of them. And it just seems like a lot of stuff to keep in the air.

[00:41:01] Like, do you have someone helping you or like, how do you manage it all?

[00:41:06] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** You know what? You're right. It is a lot. It is a lot. And no, I don't have anyone helping me. okay, so let's say Monday, I

post something on my author pages, and then Tuesday, I'll share something, on my bakery page. And then Wednesday, I'll share something on my hair, page. So I'm not posting to every account every day.

[00:41:30] I mean, I don't have time for all of that, but I am staying consistent with each account, just not daily.

[00:41:38] **David Crabill:** I was wondering if by focusing on all of these different things at once, you feel like you're spread too thin and you're not able to. Focus as much on each one as, as you would like to.

[00:41:50] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** You know, there was a time where I was so overwhelmed because I was trying to do everything every day, and it's too much. It was too much. So what I had to do is I had to sit down and I had to reevaluate and I had to decide what I wanted to take off my plate because I was driving myself nuts. So what I did was I paused.

[00:42:11] on my food blog and my author blog. I paused on my author podcast, which I've recently picked up again. And rather than post, like I said, every day to every social media channel, I've got certain days that I do, and that is so much easier on me. So I've tried it both ways. For example, I used to get up every morning and post to my author account every day, seven days a week. And, I had decent interactions, but not as, I mean, I've got over 9, 000 followers on my author account on Instagram, and I wasn't really getting much interaction. So, that's when I decided, I'm gonna pull back a little bit, and rather than post, every day, I'm gonna post less. And it did not have a negative impact on the account.

[00:43:03] Some days I post on there twice a day because right now I'm doing a writing challenge. So I'll post on there twice a day some days. But it's just, it depends on the day and it depends on what's going on. But what I had to do was, yes, I had to take a step back and I had to take some stuff off my plate and no, it has not negatively affected my social media accounts doing it that way.

[00:43:24] I'm happy to report it has not.

[00:43:25] **David Crabill:** One thing is clear is that food seems to be a common thread amongst almost everything that you do. And. You've been doing this for over a decade now, like what keeps you bringing you back to food? Why is that such an important focus for you?

[00:43:44] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** I always say that good food and books bring people together. And if you think about it, there's some truth there. So for me,

Baking and writing both make me happy. So what I've done over the years is combined the two together. So I've got my home bakery and I write about food and I love it. I don't know how else.

[00:44:09] to explain it other than it just makes me happy and, you know, I'm all about, doing what makes me happy.

[00:44:18] **David Crabill:** And have you had other experience in the food industry outside of running your own cottage food business?

[00:44:26] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Yeah, like I said, I was a pastry chef for a while at a local country club. Absolutely loved that job and was devastated when I was laid off. In high school, I worked at restaurants but no, it's always been, it's always been the baking.

[00:44:43] It's always been the baking.

[00:44:44] **David Crabill:** So I also see that In addition to all of everything else you do, you run a Facebook group that has over 10,000 members. How did that all come about?

[00:44:56] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Oh, that is so crazy. So when I first, oh my goodness, I don't even remember the name of it. it's had a couple of different name changes over the years. Basically, I just started it because again, I love baking and I figured there's other people out there who love baking. Let me start a group. And so I started the group and I also started an Easy baking page on Facebook that has like over 40, 000 people who have liked it.

[00:45:22] And they're just like, it was just one of those things where, okay, so I had a few hundred people, and then I noticed, in the group that you're referring to I noticed that around the holidays it would always increase. like the first Christmas, I had like a thousand and I don't know what happened, but one year, David, I just had a slew of new members.

[00:45:42] I'm talking thousands and thousands and thousands in one year. So I guess the group just caught on. It's called Baking for business or fun. And it just, like took off like wildfire and grew.

[00:45:56] **David Crabill:** was that like in 2021 after the pandemic?

[00:46:00] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** No, it was before. It was years before that, that it just like took off. So I don't know if maybe there was another baking

group that these people were part of that upset them or shut down or whatever and they found me. I'm really not sure, but it's just one of those things. It just took off. And uh, yeah, we talk about all things baking in there.

[00:46:25] Yes, it's everything baking, like sweet treats or bread related. As long as it's baking, then it can be posted or discussed. We post recipes. If anybody has questions about anything pertaining to baking, they can post their questions and chances are they're going to get the answer they're looking for.

[00:46:41] **David Crabill:** Does that take a lot of your time to manage that group, or is it something where you monetize it in any way, or, you know, it helps boost your other businesses or books or something like that?

[00:46:54] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** No, it's not monetized. It's definitely something I should look into, but I do have several admins that assist me with that group. Just because of the sheer size of the group, it would be a lot for me to handle on my own. So I've got three other assistants in that group and they help me out tremendously.

[00:47:14] **David Crabill:** It seems like amongst everything you do, you just really love helping people, whether that be publishing books, or, you know, selling your baked goods, or running this group. I mean, it seems like that's a pretty common thing amongst everything you do.

[00:47:29] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** I agree. that is why I do what I do. I bake because I like making people happy. I love getting their feedback, oh that was delicious, or watching them take a bite and their face light up. I just, love making people happy. The books that I write, I hope that they help somebody in one way, shape, or form.

[00:47:49] You know, the blogs that I have, I share my ideas and my recipes. To help people become better, you know, bakers. And as far as the groups I have them because. I enjoy helping people. I am not receiving anything monetary or anything like that from my blogs or my groups right now. And to be honest with you, although I have the podcast, I mean, They're monetized, but, it takes a lot of growth for a podcast to bring in, like, significant amounts of money.

[00:48:21] So, basically, I just do it all because I love it.

[00:48:24] **David Crabill:** And I see it, I don't know if you're still doing this, but at least at one point you were running virtual classes online.

[00:48:32] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** I did. I was doing Zoom, live Zoom baking classes. they were pretty successful, I have to say. And I did that from about, 2020 through 2022. it was a great way for people to get together without having to get together in person. And then I always had them recorded so that.

[00:48:51] Anyone who had purchased one of the classes would then get the recording and the recipe for, you know, included with the price that they paid. I haven't done a baking class in a while, though, simply because, you know, like I said, life throws us some curveballs sometimes and things change, so I haven't really had the opportunity, but I do have to tell you that I thoroughly enjoyed those classes.

[00:49:14] **David Crabill:** So it sounds like that was kind of a pandemic thing. Have you run in person classes as well?

[00:49:20] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** No, I have not. I have not done any in person classes. I thought about it and was offered an opportunity with my town to do that at their location. But again, just because of the way that life has happened, I haven't had the opportunity to do it.

[00:49:37] **David Crabill:** When you think back on your food business, what are the things that stand out to you that worked really well?

[00:49:45] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** for me personally, I don't have my customers come and pick their items up from my home, I meet them, and that's just a personal preference and that has worked out really well with my cottage bakery. I meet them in a public space. Not far from my house, I had a magnet made with the name of my bakery and the phone number and my logo that I'll pop on the driver's side of my car so that my clients know it's me when we meet and that has worked out really well for me.

[00:50:15] And then again social media has helped out tremendously as far as getting the word out there about my business.

[00:50:24] **David Crabill:** I'd imagine in your group or maybe even through DMs, you get asked questions from people starting a cottage food business. So, what are some of the things that you recommend to people when they start out?

[00:50:36] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Yeah, I do. I do have a lot of questions. I actually recently started a new group on Facebook for North Carolina Cottage Bakers community. This way I can help other cottage bakers in North Carolina get themselves set up successfully. So, as far as something that I would tell

people, is it always, for me, it always starts with to check with the cottage baking laws in your state.

[00:51:03] Move forward with that and then check with your town or your city to see what you need to do there. Those are the most, the two most important things that I'll say to someone to guide them in the right direction.

[00:51:15] **David Crabill:** So, what are your plans for the future? Where would you like to see your business go?

[00:51:21] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** I would like to plan weekly pop up events locally. I've started reaching out to different businesses and things and I am reaching out Side of the box. Let me tell you that. Not just like food related establishments, but other types of establishments. I'm reaching out to see if I could set up like weekly to sell, you know, my baked goods.

[00:51:44] Like I said at this point, that's the route that I'm going is scheduling pop up bakeries, porch pop ups, you know, neighborhood pop ups, things like that. Getting them on the calendar so that I can coordinate with my other job and, do these pop ups successfully. that's what I'm looking at as far as the future of the Fiery Whisk Bakery.

[00:52:04] Not to say that I would not open a brick and mortar, but before moving in that direction, I want to build the brand a bit more and get the word out a bit more about the bakery.

[00:52:18] **David Crabill:** What's the end goal for you? When do you feel like you'll Super satisfied with where the whisk is at?

[00:52:24] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** When I'm exceeding the amount of money that I'm making. With, you know, my regular job. When I'm exceeding that with the bakery, I believe that'll be the time for me to move forward with bigger things for the bakery.

[00:52:38] **David Crabill:** Did you expect to be at that point already? I mean, I'm just considering that you started it quite a long time ago.

[00:52:44] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** no, not really, because like over the years I've encountered some physical challenges where I had some spinal issues where I couldn't bake, I couldn't do hair, I couldn't use my right arm. I had pinched nerves running down. I had atrophy in my arm. Like, I've been through some tough physical situations.

[00:53:05] so there was a lot of overcoming over the years. So like I said, there was times where I couldn't bake and I couldn't even do hair. I couldn't even get off the couch for months at a time. I've had to, not only rebuild myself as a person, like physically and emotionally, you know, going through all those physical trials.

[00:53:22] I've had to then rebuild the bakery a couple of times too. Because whenever I've been down because of physical things that prevented me from being able to bake. when I came back from that, I had to build the bakery back up again and that's happened several times. So, the point I'm at now is fine.

[00:53:39] I'm not disappointed with where I am now. It's just the route that life took me. it's okay because I'm looking forward to seeing what's coming up. So I'm not disappointed, so to say, with where I am, but I am excited to see where it takes me in the future.

[00:53:56] **David Crabill:** Since you have had so many opportunities to rebuild the business, what are some things that you've done the second or third time you've started over again?

[00:54:05] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** Well, revamping the menu has been key for me. There's no sense in me keeping things on there that people aren't purchasing because then I have to keep the supplies for them on hand. So that's been really big. I've also rebranded, like I recently had a new logo made for the bakery. I do stick with the same color scheme because I want people to know it's me, but I do have a new logo and those couple of things are what I've done recently to help, you know, rebrand myself a little bit.

[00:54:37] **David Crabill:** So as you think back on your journey. What's kept you going? Why do you love doing what you do so much?

[00:54:45] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** My family, I'd say, and just my love of baking and writing and being able to help people in some way. When I say my family, they've helped keep me going. I've got two children. And I keep going harder and stronger because I want to be an example for my children. You know, I want them to see, you know, well, my mom wanted to do this and she did it.

[00:55:11] And also I want to build something so that my children have something one day. So, the bakery, for example, let's say I move forward into, you know, a brick and mortar, I want my kids to take that over and have that

one day. So, the majority of the things that I do, I do for my family. secondly, anything that I can do to help somebody, I want to do it.

[00:55:38] So, if it's just, you know, a happy, feel good podcast that people can listen to, to escape maybe the troubles of the day, or, trying a new recipe that I've posted a lot of times, like I say baking soothes my soul, and I think it has that effect on a lot of people. So, if I could provide them with recipes, to bring them some peace, Then that's what makes me happy.

[00:56:01] So all in all, I do what I do because I love it. I want to be a positive example for my family and because I want to make other people happy.

[00:56:11] **David Crabill:** Well, thank you so much, Deanna, for sharing your story with us. Now, if people would like to learn more about you, how can they find you or where can they reach out?

[00:56:21] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** We've discussed a couple of different options here today, but the podcast is Deanna's Recipe Box and my Facebook business page is the Fiery Whisk Bakery. The Fiery Whisk Bakery is also on TikTok and Instagram. And then I have my writer account, which is writer underscore Deanna on Instagram where you can find like all my books and stuff like that.

[00:56:45] I do have a website for the bakery. It's thefierywhiskbakery.com, and the author website is dianamartinezbay.com.

[00:56:54] my current food blog is dianasrecipebox.com.

[00:56:58] **David Crabill:** Great. Well, thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today.

[00:57:04] **Deanna Martinez-Bey:** It has been my pleasure. Thank you so much for being interested in me. I appreciate that.

[00:57:10] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager Podcast.

[00:57:16] For more information about this episode, go to forrager.com/podcast/101.

[00:57:20] 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.

[00:57:33] 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 [cottage food course.com](http://cottagefoodcourse.com).

[00:57:45] Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.