

# Megan Shonka with Happy Mango 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 Megan Shonka. 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.

[00:00:20] 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](https://forrager.com/email).

[00:00:46] All right, so I have Megan Shonka on the show today. lives in Papillion, Nebraska, and sells baked goods with her cottage food business, Happy Mango Bakery.

[00:00:55] Megan has always been an entrepreneur at heart, but it wasn't until the pandemic hit in 2020 that she finally decided to start her own business. Although she sells baked goods from her home, her real focus is in building community, and that mission has kept her going despite many struggles along the way.

[00:01:13] Megan is now in the process of expanding into her own brick and mortar bakery, and in this episode, she candidly shares the many sacrifices and successes that have gotten her to this point.

[00:01:24] And with that, let's jump right into this episode. Welcome to the show, Megan. Nice to have you here.

[00:01:31] **Megan Shonka:** Thanks for having me.

[00:01:32] **David Crabill:** Well, Megan, can you take me back to the beginning of this journey? How did it all get started?

[00:01:37] **Megan Shonka:** It was kind of an odd story. I didn't exactly like set out to run a bakery, but after I had my third baby in January of 2020, I thought, well, this would be a great time for me to figure out what I want to do for business. Cause I've always kind of been an entrepreneur, but I just wanted to find the thing that was really like fit all the puzzle pieces together.

[00:01:58] And in March, as everyone knows, the pandemic just shut everything down. And months leading up to that, I was. I was running an Airbnb out of my home basement. So that was kind of my job and my source of income at that point. And I had anticipated continuing that until I figured out what else I wanted to do.

[00:02:13] So given that the pandemic shut down my Airbnb option as income, I figured it would be the best time to dive into what I wanted to do for a business for myself. And given that I already knew how to bake and I was noticing lots of people having celebrations that were COVID friendly, where it was just

[00:02:30] people in their driveways with a bunch of cupcakes waving to people as they drove by saying happy birthday and handing them a cupcake. And that was ultimately what everyone's celebrations were at the beginning. So I thought, well, I can do cupcakes, so why the heck not? and so I started in with that and I, the big thing that I really started doing was something more artistic instead of just cupcakes.

[00:02:51] So I was making these bouquets with cupcakes. I had seen these videos of people taking cupcakes and decorating them like flowers and then putting them in an arrangement that made them look like a bouquet and they were really pretty. So I thought, Oh, I'm going to try that. And that's kind of how it started.

[00:03:06] **David Crabill:** So, I'm thinking, like, if you were running this Airbnb before starting this bakery, like, have you been an entrepreneur for a while? It seems like you already had that kind of entrepreneurial spirit

[00:03:18] in your blood.

[00:03:20] **Megan Shonka:** Yeah I would say I've had that from a very young age I mean, I have to believe it's genetic. I don't know. My dad was as well. And so I just started doing things when I was little that anything I thought of, I'm like, Ooh, I can make money doing this. It just, it was not. An optional part of my brain.

[00:03:35] That's always where I went to. Everything I did the path was always, I can make this a business. So I have forever had that kind of ingrained in my brain and everything I've done and the bakery is no different. Everything I'm doing with this, there's always one extra thing I can do or one extra step to take or one different way to connect with people or offer them something and, make money and grow it.

[00:03:55] And that's where my brain's at. Yeah.

[00:03:57] **David Crabill:** So you already had entrepreneurial experience when you started this bakery. What sort of skills do you think you had when you started it that kind of gave you a leg up and allowed you to be more successful from the get go?

[00:04:10] **Megan Shonka:** I think being an entrepreneur or in an entrepreneurial space, like I grew up in a business. From the time I was eight years old, my family owned this business that I got to sit the behind the scenes of it. Even from a young age, you can see all like, you know, behind the curtain, so to speak. So you kind of get a different perspective of it from the get go and just knowing and learning how you interact with customers.

[00:04:31] You know, what is the appropriate way to do that? Kind of like from a hospitality standpoint, you know, you talk to people who are into fine dining. Things like that. And hospitality is a huge thing. And really that's just a term for how do you interact with the customer and make sure they have everything they need.

[00:04:44] That's ultimately what that is. And so seeing that from, you know, the flip side of it, not being the customer, but being on the other end of it growing up in that was kind of it was bread in me. I don't really ever remember learning it. It was just kind of what was around me. And so I think that definitely gave me a leg up of just knowing the process people go through.

[00:05:03] No matter where they go, whatever business, if you are the owner of that business, you want to ensure that the customer is being taken care of at every single step of the way. And so that was one major component that I got from growing up in that.

[00:05:16] **David Crabill:** So have you always run businesses you know, like what's your background in?

[00:05:22] **Megan Shonka:** I have a background in lots of different things. It's kind of an odd trajectory to get where I am right now.

[00:05:27] I grew up in my family business and so I was just kind of a kid running amok around what we were doing. We owned a family entertainment center here in our town, which had things like mini golf and go karts and batting cages. You know, arcade, you name it, just that sort of thing. It was all owned by our family.

[00:05:45] And growing up in that, I got to see everything. And I also then became an employee there. So I was just, you know, one of your daily workers. And then when I got into college, I was studying psychology and then I flipped to studying some things in fine arts, like creative writing and then theater. And that ended up being the major that I got ultimately was theater.

[00:06:05] And so a lot of random background to the land and somehow business. But having grown up in the business, I saw the perspective and the benefits of it. And so I kind of realized where the family business was lacking and tried to fill in those gaps. So like we didn't have an HR director per se.

[00:06:23] So in college, in growing up through it. I decided that I told my mom, you need an HR director and that's what I'm going to be. So there was no, there's no discussion. It was just, okay, now I'm doing this. And so I became the HR person that helped manage and hire and train all the staff, set up all the structure in place to make sure that they had all their training in place, that they were able to get All the tasks done throughout their day and that they had appropriate guidelines to work through all their stuff.

[00:06:50] That was a major background for me now being in a position I'm in where I have to now hire and train people to work for me in a bakery setting. And while the things I'm teaching them are different, my ability to take what I learned from that, like training people into this is so beneficial. So I kind of, Learned all of that from the ground up.

[00:07:10] I was kind of like, it was from scratch, you know, I I just was thrown into it as we didn't have a structure, we didn't have a system. So I just kind of created it based on what I felt seemed right and then tweaked it over time. And so that gave me a lot of background in order to be able to do it in my bakery.

[00:07:25] **David Crabill:** So you do have a team now? You have employees?

[00:07:30] **Megan Shonka:** They're all technically still contractors because some of them may be short term, but hopefully once I get into a larger, once I expand a little bit more, I can take them on as true employees. But yeah, I have a couple of people that come in a little bit. Every week and help me prep for things. Everything I do is from scratch.

[00:07:48] So I literally have to have all the mixes we're doing for cake, whether it's vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, pink champagne, whatever, whatever your orders are for that week and get those mixes prepped and then, create the batter for those, get the batter into whatever size. Tins we need for whatever size cakes we're having ordered and then get them baked.

[00:08:06] Then later in the week we're doing all the prep work for getting everything stacked and decorated and boxed, take pictures of them. All those steps that go through it. I have people coming in and helping me with that stuff now. So that's really nice to have assistance.

[00:08:20] **David Crabill:** I'm just thinking about, you've obviously started this during the pandemic, and would you say it's fair to say that if it weren't for the pandemic that you would not have a bakery right now?

[00:08:31] **Megan Shonka:** Yeah, I'd say that's fair. I mean, I knew I wanted to do a business of some kind. I just didn't think it would fall back on being a bakery. And actually the thing that I first thought I would be pursuing was a craft shop. I Was going to do like DIY crafts, you know, the things you see on Pinterest, all those fun things and have a shop where people could come in and do those things and just provide all the supplies, all the tools and everything for them and do classes and, bunch of stuff like that, that's ultimately what I was thinking about doing before I had my last baby.

[00:09:01] And that was kind of where my mind was. And then somehow the pandemic shifted everything, kind of pulled the rug out from under me and made me. focus on, well, what can you really do right now? And of course a craft shop's not very feasible in my house. So I thought, well, I can bake. So yeah, definitely.

[00:09:16] If the pandemic hadn't hit, I, I don't know that I would be where I am right now.

[00:09:20] **David Crabill:** Now that you see where you are, do you look back, and I know you're working for your family and family business and everything, but do you wish that you had started your own business sooner?

[00:09:31] **Megan Shonka:** Oh yeah, definitely. I definitely look at the timeline and think, gosh, where would I be now? Had I started before I had my baby, you know? And just wondering how I would have navigated that being pregnant and then having the baby for the first few months and everything. I think that's probably why I didn't sooner cause I thought mentally I wasn't ready.

[00:09:47] And I, I did have some mental health issues leading up to and during the pregnancy of my last baby that were pretty significant. So, I feel like I wish I would have done the business sooner, but I also kind of wish I would have. Taking care of my mental health sooner so that I could have been in a better mental place to then pursue it.

[00:10:04] Because I don't know that I would have been able to pull the trigger on it. Had I not been seeking treatment?

[00:10:11] **David Crabill:** Alright, so you're headed into the pandemic. You are losing income from your Airbnb thing, replacing it with this bakery. So how did it all start? Did you just start posting on social? Did you start telling friends? Like lead me through the trajectory of your early stage business.

[00:10:29] **Megan Shonka:** Well, early on, I was really just dabbling with stuff, you know, like I said, I was looking at what people were doing for celebrations and I thought, well, cupcakes are easy. I can make that happen. But I was doing these cupcake bouquets like taking cupcakes and decorating them like flowers and then arranging them to look like a bouquet.

[00:10:45] And they were really cute and I made them for mother's day that year cause we couldn't do anything or go anywhere with our families like we normally do. So I just, I made those and then I went and dropped them on the doorsteps of all the mom people in my life and left them there. And then was posting pictures on Facebook after.

[00:11:01] Just saying, Hey, I made these for Mother's Day and I think they're really cool. Do you think I should sell them? Just kind of throwing it out there, half serious, not really thinking I was going to pursue it. And the flood of comments that came back and um, said, Oh my gosh, yes, you should sell it. So many people on my Facebook said, you should sell it.

[00:11:18] Yes, you should. I wish I lived closer. I would totally buy one from you. Just, you know, Thank you. Bam, bam, bam, bam, bam, all the way down the list. Like 20, 30 people responding to that. And I was like, Oh, there might

be something here. So that's when I really had the idea of, Huh, maybe I should seriously pursue something.

[00:11:32] So between mother's day and then when I quote unquote officially launched, which is when I. Put my first post out on Facebook on my business page, which I made cause it was free. So I put it out there and I had put like a little teaser a week before and said, we'll be, you know, officially open for orders for various people.

[00:11:52] In a week. And then on July 4th, 2020, I put up my first post and said, all right, come at me, bring me all your orders, all the stuff that you need. And I shared it with my friends and my family like physically took that post and said, share and sent it to them and said, if you can please share this and post this on your page, I'd really appreciate the help.

[00:12:09] So it was a whole lot of looking at my current community of people and Having them help me get a grassroots movement to get it out there. That was like the initial push. And for a long time, it was really just friends and family ordering from me. So that's kind of how it snowballed and started

[00:12:26] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like your business took off pretty quickly or was it pretty slow?

[00:12:32] **Megan Shonka:** For the first year, it felt like it was pretty slow. And that was probably due to the fact that I didn't really know. What to do to stay connected, you know, to, keep posts out there, to get things posted regularly on social media and things like that. I didn't really know what I was doing. So I was just kind of flying by the seat of my pants.

[00:12:48] So I didn't do a whole lot that first year, but the following year, there was a farmer's market that's in our city I decided to sign up for that and do that. So it was literally going and being at the market once a week, every Wednesday night. And having to prep everything I'm doing for that week a few days ahead of time, get it ready to go, get it packaged put in containers and ready to get out the door every Wednesday night at like 4.

[00:13:13] 30. I had to load my car and bring it down to the park and unload it and everything else. And I think that was probably the first big push into seeing a trend of increase in awareness and sales. And I still credit that to the fact that that was, That's the whole, my whole intention behind my business now is tapping into community and looking back on it, realizing that the way that I was able to get more traction and get out there more and have more people be aware

of me was the farmer's market, which is the ultimate tapping into the community.

[00:13:43] you're there every single week, the same people come through and they see you and they try your samples and they buy things from you and you get. what you could call regulars because they see your face all the time, every week for, 12 or more weeks straight because you're there all the time.

[00:13:57] And I think that's a huge component of what I try to do now that's just stay in front of the community, make sure you're reaching out and not just for purposes of like me getting sales, but being able to reach back into giving back to that community.

[00:14:12] **David Crabill:** Can you expand on that, you know, talking about your intention now is, being involved with the community. What does that look like now in your business?

[00:14:20] **Megan Shonka:** Well now it, it looks a lot like I go out and I do, I'm involved in networking groups. And so there'll be groups that, meet once a week and networking groups are just a bunch of business people or business minded people. They don't have to be business owners, although there is a group I'm part of that is that it's all female business owners.

[00:14:38] And so it's a great place for people to connect with other people who are kind of in the same boat as them, who understand their world and their life and the way things get navigated because you own a business. It's a very unique challenge and a very unique struggle set that we're up against. And so that's one of those things that I tap into all the time and anywhere that I do this, whether it's like a women's networking group, or it's just my regular.

[00:15:01] Co op, networking group, all of those I'm constantly telling people about what I'm doing. I'm updating them of what's happening in the bakery. What's new? What's different? What do we have going on? And I'm seeing what's happening in their world at the same time. So I'm staying plugged in to their lives.

[00:15:16] And I can then, you know, find things that I'm doing in my day and something pops up and I think, Oh geez, I know that florist needed something. They needed XYZ and I just found someone who does that and I'm going to go refer it back to them. And so that's one way to just kind of cycle through. And keep the ball rolling and give back.



[00:15:32] Another way I do that is anywhere that I go, whether it's just, you know, random people I run into or networking, which is where most of it comes from, is offer donations to various things. So people have come to me and asked for donations to fundraisers that they're doing. So whether it's like a breast cancer fundraiser or a fundraiser for a kid's organization, or the most recent one that I did was for an organization.

[00:15:57] It's called Cake for Kids, and they partner with local organizations that help underprivileged youth provide cakes or treats for celebrations for them that wouldn't normally get it. Things like foster kids, who get bounced around to different homes all the time, and they want to be able to provide a treat for their birthdays.

[00:16:11] or other special occasions that they have where they normally would not get it. And they partner with this organization. And so I then volunteer to do those sorts of things as to provide baked goods or help them do fundraising. We did that just recently, we did a bakery tour around our town. And so I was one of the tour guides that got to go have fun and get on a bus with a bunch of other people and then show them around town and show what's out there.

[00:16:31] But that kind of tapping into the community is what I mean when I say, like, want to be able to make community part of the big. Thing that I'm doing with my bakery. It's probably the most critical and most important part that I cling to, especially when I'm struggling or having a hard time or hard day.

[00:16:46] And I think, why on earth am I doing this? Like, this is really hard, but that's a piece that I come back to constantly. And I say, it's not just about. It's about me and me having a hard day. It's about what bigger thing can I do to plug back into the community that's helped me for so long to get this thing off the ground and that's just completing the cycle.

[00:17:04] **David Crabill:** What would you say are the struggles that you are facing or have faced in your business?

[00:17:10] **Megan Shonka:** Oh gosh. Well, learning an entire different industry is, that's one. I've done a lot of different dabbling and entrepreneur stuff, but I never ran anything food related. So it's a whole different ball game, especially when you're in cottage baking. Whether you have a cottage bakery or a commercial bakery, there's, It's, struggles and, and limitations that are thrown on you all throughout.

[00:17:29] Cottage baking, one of the struggles is having specific rules you follow, which are beneficial. I mean, I, I definitely would want anyone else that I'm getting baked goods from to know that they're operating their kitchen in a way that's.

[00:17:45] But sometimes when I want to get super creative, I want to try something new and the stuff that I'm doing or the ingredients I'm using aren't allowed to be sold within cottage food regulations. It's a struggle for me to get around that. And so I'm limited on, and I struggle with. So of wanting to go and be super, super creative and not being able to follow it through and be able to offer it to customers because it doesn't fall under what I'm allowed to sell.

[00:18:10] So that's one of the struggles that I've noticed. Another one is just having to figure out how to manage orders that are coming in. You know, how do I keep track of my income and expenses to make sure everything's how do I manage my orders? Get invoices sent? How do I get payments from people? You know, all those things were struggles that in the beginning were just overwhelming and I couldn't do a lot of that most of the time. Part of that was my mental health. And I kind of got that aligned a little bit better, so I feel more confident with it now.

[00:18:44] And then I also was able to take and delegate things that I didn't do well, so that helped a lot. But so many of those struggles were things that hit you a lot in the beginning, and as you kind of go along, They get lighter. They're not as heavy anymore.

[00:18:57] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I mean, thinking about you jumping into this brand new industry, like how did you learn this stuff? You didn't have a background in the food industry, like you said.

[00:19:07] **Megan Shonka:** Yeah, no, I did not. I'm an artist and so that helped me from the creative side of things. I just came at it with a view of I'm making art and I happen to be using edible stuff to do it. So that was. That's where my brain started, but then the whole idea of how do you legitimately bake a cake that actually tastes good and how do you stack it to get it to stay.

[00:19:25] Cause you, you get these orders for, I would like a three tiered cake. And I was like, what is a three tiered cake? And I would go, basically I'm like a YouTube school graduate. I guess it's, you never really graduate. You just keep going back to YouTube and typing in, how do you make a three tiered cake?

[00:19:38] And you watch a video and you try it out in your own kitchen. And then, if it doesn't work, you go watch another few videos and figure out where you went wrong and you do it again. That's all I did. And during quarantine, when everyone's literally stuck in their house, can't do anything else, I was just on YouTube constantly.

[00:19:52] I was watching one video after another about different techniques that you can do, different baking tips and just constantly on YouTube.

[00:20:00] and teaching myself stuff in my own kitchen. That's. That was my learning process.

[00:20:05] So I don't have any culinary accolades or anything. It's just, that's how Um,

[00:20:10] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I mean, I know you started with the cupcakes and with the cupcake bouquets. You sell a lot more than that now, so how did you transition and when did you transition to other things?

[00:20:22] **Megan Shonka:** started expanding into other areas besides just cupcakes, basically, when I would get bored. Because my brain is, you know, not wired like everyone else's, I'll try something for a little bit and then get really good at it and be like, oh, I can do this really well and easily now and I need another challenge.

[00:20:38] So I would go onto YouTube and look something else up, which is why, you know, I got into macarons because I loved the idea of making them in every video I had seen. I was like, oh, other people make these. These should be no big deal. They were absolutely a big deal. I had no idea how much work went into making macarons until I was on, I don't know, try out like 570.

[00:20:55] I don't even know how many I did. It was, it was insane. So I would just, dabble with stuff or I'd see a video on YouTube watching for a specific technique I was specifically looking up and then something else would pop up. I'm like, Ooh, what's that? And so I go down the rabbit hole and. See this whole other baking technique.

[00:21:12] And I think, Oh my gosh, I want to try that. So I would try it in my kitchen. And then I would say, Oh, I want to sell this. So now I do lots of other things mostly because I just want the new challenge. And I think that's. That's what drew me to baking and also keeps me interested in it because there is an

unending just flood of information and techniques out there that have to do with the baking world.

[00:21:33] Like I will never stop learning and I think that's perfect for me because I love learning new things and I love trying new things and experimenting.

[00:21:40] **David Crabill:** where did you land? You started with the cupcakes, are you still doing a lot of those? What, what do you do most of now?

[00:21:48] **Megan Shonka:** I'm still doing cupcakes. I also, the thing I get most orders for are custom decorated cakes and custom cookies. I would say the thing that I am known for that people will recommend me, you know, if they happen to be in a Facebook group and someone says, can anyone find me someone that can do this?

[00:22:05] And it's usually Sculpted cakes. Like edible illusions. So I did a cake one time that was a KFC chicken bucket with chicken on top of it. But it was made out of cake.

[00:22:16] And so doing stuff like that, especially since I have that artist background, like I have that eye that just wants to create something really cool looking like a sculpture and make it edible, but it looks like something else entirely. And that's probably the thing that I love doing the most. Cause I get to be super creative.

[00:22:29] I get to get in the zone and really pull out my art skills and, put that into play. So that's probably the thing that is the most. The key thing that I like creating the most and what people know me for, but I will do custom cakes that actually look like cakes, custom cookies, cake pops, macarons, sculpted cakes.

[00:22:48] So, like, I have a whole slew of things that I'll do, and then in the holidays I do various different types of baking things, too. gingerbread cookies or holiday cookies and treats, I'll pull those out for seasonal stuff.

[00:23:00] **David Crabill:** Would you say that your sculpted cakes are your most profitable item, or are they just the item that you enjoy the most?

[00:23:08] **Megan Shonka:** Both. They're definitely most profitable, but because when I'm doing a sculpted cake, I have to take into consideration in my pricing, the fact that I'm bringing a certain expertise to the craft. it's not just

baking a cake, putting these three layers together and putting frosting on the outside and then putting some, you know, decorations on it.

[00:23:26] There's a lot more involved, especially from a planning perspective. So I do have to take all that into consideration when I'm pricing out those things. So the sculpted cakes are more expensive than a typical just like a three layer cake or a tiered cake because it requires a lot more technical skill from an artist's perspective and structurally than a regular cake is.

[00:23:45] So yeah, I would say it's probably both.

[00:23:48] **David Crabill:** Other than the KFC cake, what would you say are your most favorite or memorable designs, whether that be cakes or cookies?

[00:23:56] **Megan Shonka:** Well, I have a couple of favorite cookie designs that I did. I did one set that was for someone that wanted like more grown up cookie set and it was like a whiskey bottle and a whiskey barrel and one of those wax seals that you see on a liquor bottle. That was a really fun one to do. It was a very grown up version.

[00:24:13] And as far as cakes are concerned, I had a couple of favorites and mostly it was because I kind of got to be creative and do my own thing without restriction from like a customer saying, I specifically want this exact thing. I just got to play and have fun. Anytime I get to play and just let my creative juices flow, that's when I'm, I'm the most in tune with what I'm doing.

[00:24:32] So. I've used my kids as my, customers that I get to craft and be creative with because I'll ask like my oldest what he wants for his birthday cake and he's like, I don't know. I don't care. And so I'll say, all right, I'm going to make you whatever I want. he's like, okay. One year I made him a chess set.

[00:24:46] It was literally like the cake was a sheet cake that looked like a chess board. And then all the pieces were made out of chocolate and they could literally play the chess game and then eat it. That was one year, another year I made him a hamburger cake. Like an oversized looking hamburger with all the pieces and layers and everything.

[00:25:00] I made that. Those are both for him. And then I did a axolotl cake that was not for child that, that, or one of my children, that was for. a customer, they specifically asked if I could make a cake that looked like an axolotl, and I'm not sure if you know what those are, but they're like these little amphibian

kind of fish looking creatures that live in the water and some of them are kind of pink in color and they have these little frills that come off the back of their neck.

[00:25:25] They're really cute, but after looking at pictures, I thought, Oh my gosh, how am I going to make that? But that one was really fun because when you, like, get into it, and you get the end result, and then you step back and you see what you created, like, that's the final, that's the dopamine that you're looking for when you're trying to be creative as an artist, so, those are the kinds of stuff I love doing.

[00:25:44] **David Crabill:** I did see that cake in your social feeds and it is an impressive cake for sure.

[00:25:49] So how, how do you price everything, your cakes, cookies, et cetera?

[00:25:54] **Megan Shonka:** Cookies, I actually priced them when I first got started, I was not really charging what I know now to be like an adequate amount. It was really hard for me starting off. I love being able to charge people for what I did because I thought, well, I enjoy it so much, which is what I hear from so many cottage bakers that they're just like, I have a hard time.

[00:26:12] I really struggle, charging well for my cakes. They'll make this whole elaborate thing and they'll charge like \$30 for it. And I'll look at it and think, I'm sorry, but that is \$150 worth of work. Why are you undercutting yourself? But I used to do it too. In the beginning, I had no idea what I was worth.

[00:26:26] I didn't know what my value was, especially coming from an art perspective, like an art background. I undercut that so much and not realizing that there's other people out there who make cakes but don't have the artist perspective or the artist skill set and that you should be charging for. And so in the beginning, I think I charged less than half of what I do now only because I didn't realize what I was worth and the way I break things down at this point is, It's so much per serving for a cake.

[00:26:52] So let's say someone wants an 8 inch cake. That's about 20 servings. I would take those 20 servings and multiply it by however much that particular flavor is and different flavors cost more based on ingredients. So let's say they want a chocolate cake, 20 servings. That'd be like 3 a serving. So that base cost of that cake would be 60, and then depending on what they want to put on top of the cake, decoration wise, if it's really simple, easy decorations with buttercream, and just, you charge a little bit extra for that.

[00:27:21] If they want really big, ornate things, like a sculpted fondant character, or something else really elaborate on top of the cake that will take a lot more time, I charge for my time. On top of that too. And there's lots of different calculators out there that you can get that will help you figure out how much your time is worth.

[00:27:37] But in reality, you have to kind of look at, what's the base cost that people are paying out and about? Like what is minimum wage? are you going to pay yourself less than minimum wage? To create this thing that is a specialized skill. And I was not doing that initially.

[00:27:51] I'm better with it now. Probably not charging exactly what I should ultimately, but I'm hoping to slowly get there and build my confidence and build my ability to ask for more money.

[00:28:01] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I saw a post of yours from last year as maybe about two years into your business that you said you still had not turned a profit. Do you feel like that's still the case today?

[00:28:12] **Megan Shonka:** Yes and no. the business as a whole is definitely grossing more money. But I also have more expenses. So, you know, I have staff I have to pay. I have daycare I have to pay. So if you think about me personally getting a profit from the business that really gets turned right back around and funneled into my daycare costs so that my kids can be taken care of while I'm working.

[00:28:33] So I guess from a hard line on paper, I suppose it probably does look like I'm making more money now, but. that money's not really, it's not really fun money that I can go spend on whatever I want. It's kind of like, let's pay your bills and groceries and then make sure my kids are taken care of.

[00:28:47] That's kind of what it's going towards. But that is, you know, a really common thing in business in general, first three to five years, you're really going to be, is the building stage. You know, you're not necessarily going to be raking in the money. Anyone that tells you getting in an industry like this one, especially is going to make you money overnight is either lying or selling you something.

[00:29:04] That's, that's not an easy go. So I don't necessarily recommend people get into something like this just because they love it and think they're going to make a ton of money right off the bat. That's not necessarily how business works, but I know that. And so I know having grown up in this and

realizing that's just the general trajectory, that's the natural stages of business and that's how it will grow.

[00:29:24] I'm just going through it and willing to deal with all the struggles at this point. Realizing that on the other side of this, once we get past the growth stage, we'll be able to pull in more money and I can actually get paid more and pay my staff more and reinvest.

[00:29:38] **David Crabill:** So considering that it's been A slow growth process and not easy, which I guess you expected. Have you thought about quitting ever or are you just sort of knowing that that's the way that the business is going to go in its early days?

[00:29:55] **Megan Shonka:** Oh no, I have thought about quitting regularly. And that is another natural state of being in business mind. You know, you will put your heart and soul into something and then it'll go really well. You'll have a really great week and just be on cloud nine and you think this is amazing.

[00:30:08] I'm so glad I made this decision. And then next week something will pull the rug out from under you and you'll have a whole emotional upset and I'm not going to be sitting in the corner bawling and thinking, well, why am I doing this? So no, I've absolutely wanted to quit multiple times over.

[00:30:24] There was a period of time throughout my business where I was doing the farmer's market for that, that second year that I was in business. And it was stressful. I think my neurodivergence doesn't really help me from a planning or organizational perspective. And so having to be extremely organized.

[00:30:39] To get everything ready for that market. Every single week was so much work and I was doing it by myself at that point. I did not have help at that time for any aspect of the business, so even more so for me, and I was just struggling to get by and do it, and every single week I would go and set up would be so stressful and horrific.

[00:30:56] I would get everything set and I'd be sitting there waiting for people to come up and order everything. And in that moment I would think, I just want to quit. I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want to run a business. I don't want to come back here next week. I'm done. But then, you know, as the market goes on and people start coming up and talking to you and connecting and ordering stuff and asking about custom orders and purchasing cupcakes, like I



get into that and I start feeling better and I realized, Oh yeah, this is why I'm doing it.

[00:31:22] But man. The number of times I've wanted to quit, I think I've lost count. It definitely is there.

[00:31:28] **David Crabill:** I mean, it sounds maybe like you've been getting burnt out. Would you say that that's accurate?

[00:31:34] **Megan Shonka:** Yes, that is accurate. And a lot of that is me not having appropriate expectations for what the business was going to do or what I felt like I was capable of. Push myself past my limits even when I knew I shouldn't have, but I said, Oh, but it's for a good cause. It's kind of like, I'll sacrifice myself now cause I know it's going to pay off in the future.

[00:31:54] And unfortunately when it comes to your mental health, that's not necessarily the case, so I definitely did. There were a couple times where I worked way too late into the night for way too long, like too many days in a row, and could definitely feel the burnout creeping up. And there were a few times I think over the last few years that I definitely had like a burnout situation.

[00:32:15] Like I went through a week of just burnout and then being hung over from the burnout and trying to recover while still trying to run the business, which, not a smart thing to do. I don't recommend that. I hope that there's people out there who are listening and realize that like, if you love what you're doing, that's great.

[00:32:31] Don't do it as a sacrifice for something, learn from a mistake that I, and I'm sure many other people have made. It's, I have a new mantra now I tell myself if it costs me my sanity or my relationships with the people around me, it is too expensive. And I base what I do now on the decisions that I make now, like what orders am I going to take on?

[00:32:52] What days am I going to take off to have time? What things are going to be my priority? What obligations am I going to put in front of me? All of that goes through that filter. Is this too expensive for me and my mental health? And if the answer is yes, then I say no to that thing. And it helps now having realized that that's what I need to do and that I have people that I can delegate certain things to that I don't have to struggle so much and sacrifice so much of myself and my mental capacity just in order to make things work. I can offload it to people and so that's helpful.

[00:33:24] **David Crabill:** Just from looking at your social feeds, it looks like you're a people pleaser. Like, it looks like you like to say yes. Uh, You think that's part of the problem?

[00:33:34] **Megan Shonka:** Oh yeah, for sure. And this is, this is all things that, should be talking to a therapist about for sure. But it's, it's just one of those, it's like ingrained in me from the way I was raised, from the way I grew up and from all of my personal, struggles when I was younger.

[00:33:48] It just sticks with you. you can get to a certain point where it's very hard to separate that from what you know you should be doing for the sake of your health. And it's been a learning experience for me for sure. I'm absolutely not great at it anymore. I will still say yes to things and I'm like, Oh man, that was the wrong choice.

[00:34:06] Then I feel like I can't backpedal on it cause I already committed, but I am definitely better at it now than I was.

[00:34:13] **David Crabill:** Why do you keep doing it? I mean, it sounds like you've overcome some of these things to some degree, but you know, it's been a struggle. It's been difficult. What keeps you going?

[00:34:23] **Megan Shonka:** I think knowing that this is the first thing from an entrepreneur standpoint, I've dabbled in so many things over the years, but this is the first thing that I found that really Checks all the boxes for me. It gives me creative freedom. I get to do something artistic. I get to work with people. I get to teach people cause I don't just do the bakery.

[00:34:43] I also teach classes to help teach people how to do the decorating and everything. And I love doing that. That fills my soul. So the bakery keeps me going because I get to do something that I love every day, even if there's aspects of it that are not my favorite, like, you know, Plugging numbers into a spreadsheet or keeping track of receipts, the menial tasks that drive my brain crazy.

[00:35:05] I, I still do it because I ultimately love what I'm doing and I love the fact that I can be plugged into my community in a way that makes me feel like I'm part of something and that, that feels really good. So every morning waking up, the first thing that pops in my head is what's my to do list? What's the next thing I get to do today?

[00:35:23] In order to get closer to that goal. And that's what keeps me going.

[00:35:27] **David Crabill:** In terms of teaching, can you elaborate on that a little bit more? How did that all come about?

[00:35:32] **Megan Shonka:** So I, everything that I've ever done has always gravitated towards, Oh, I want to teach people this. And I think that's just my nature and I want to be able to teach and help and allow other people to tap into their creativity. I love doing that. And I was up at a local shop here finding more baking supplies.

[00:35:53] And I, at that point I was trying to figure out, I want to be able to teach this stuff. How would I go about doing this in my house? Am I even allowed to? And I checked into it, and yes, you're allowed to teach in your home, but in looking at the space I had, I'm like, I am really limited. I can only fit so many people around my dining room table.

[00:36:08] I don't know how I would navigate this with my entire family in the house as well. Like it just feels very crowded. So I was trying to figure out where and how I could find a space. That I could take all my stuff and I could just teach there and at this craft shop, they sell cake decorating stuff.

[00:36:23] They have a whole section for it. So I'm in there and I'm looking for my supplies on a lower shelf and I look up and there's a sign posted right there in front of me that says, do you want to teach? Contact us. And I thought, well, if that isn't a sign from the universe, I don't know what it is because I was literally in that mental space of, I need to find a place and it's right there.

[00:36:41] So I, I sent them an email, I think, and I contacted them. And then I came in a little bit later and talked to them about it, kind of did a little interview. And then a month later, I was in their shop teaching. And that was, Just about two years ago in October is I've been teaching at that space and it's been so lovely having that place there to go to, to be able to expand my knowledge and share it with other people so that they can then tap into what they like doing too.

[00:37:07] It's been so nice.

[00:37:09] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I can see you've done a lot of classes there. I think you've taught at least hundreds of people. And what have you learned over the last couple of years? What do you bring in now into your classes that you didn't know when you started?

[00:37:24] **Megan Shonka:** Well, I think with anything that you're trying to teach someone else to do that you know how to do, like I have to pause and

break down every single step that I'm doing into like five different steps, because in my head I've done it so often that I don't think about all the little nuances that other people don't have.

[00:37:41] So that's been a big learning curve for me. I'm trying to teach someone else to do something. It's not just, yeah, then, you know, you just take the frosting and you go like this and show them. It's like, they really need to know every individual step. Like, you're gonna take this spatula that is in your hand, and you're gonna take the cake, and you're gonna hold the spatula exactly at this angle, and then you're gonna take the frosting, and you're gonna go over top of it like so, and then you're gonna hold your hand like this while you're turning.

[00:38:04] Like, there's all these little, individual steps that are involved in just doing one specific thing on a cake. And so having to break everything down that way for someone is causing me to like, rethink what I'm doing. And so there's been a lot of learning.

[00:38:19] That's probably been the biggest one, and then how to teach multiple people at the same time. You know, these classes are anywhere from, for a small class I might have 6 people, but I could have up to 18 or 20 people in a class as well. And after a time, I was doing these by myself and I realized this is getting really difficult for me to teach up here at the front of the class and then, you know, go around to everyone's table and check in with them and make sure they're doing okay and then go back up to the front and teach another thing.

[00:38:44] So after having taken on some baking assistants at my house to help me with that I took to asking them to come help me at the classes. So it's me usually and one other person, they're helping me make their rounds and assist with people so that we can better help them get the assistance they need and the instruction that they need to leave successful.

[00:39:03] So those are some big things I've learned from teaching.

[00:39:06] **David Crabill:** I imagine that this shop is taking their cut, or maybe they're taking their payment and just paying you a certain rate. Like, have you thought about trying to set it up yourself, you know, and take control and run it as your own business?

[00:39:21] **Megan Shonka:** Yeah, definitely. It is a piece of my business that is a right now. I'm technically contracted with them. So, I'll get paid a certain amount per person that signs up for the class. Whatever remaining is there is

what they take as their cut for, you know, they're providing the services. They're providing some of the tools that people get to take home and practice with.

[00:39:39] They're providing the marketing to get the word out there and having people sign up. And when people sign up for the classes, they're doing it on the shop site. So I don't have anything to do with the whole, taking payments or whatnot. That's all through them. And they give me my cut. And I am in the process actually of opening up my own shop instead of being in my house.

[00:39:57] I'm looking at a commercial space that I want to be able to get into and that should be able to house not just the bakery itself, but room to hold classes. So I would then be doing that completely on my own. And then another couple of things that I want to be able to house within the shop, one of them is retail space.

[00:40:14] So just offering like, basic tools and things people would want to buy in order to be able to do the skills and techniques or learning there at home. So I could provide that for them. And then another big component that I'm really, really excited and it's going to be a lot of work, but I'm, it's another one of those community components that I'm really eager to get going is a baking library.

[00:40:34] There are some places around town or I guess all over the U. S. I've heard of some actual libraries that you go to check out books and things will have a section where you can get cake pans. And I've been to some of these libraries and they have, I don't know. Maybe 10, 15 cake pans that you can check out.

[00:40:49] And it's a nice idea. And I thought if that's the thing they're doing, why not expand it and make it not just cake pans, but other baking tools baking items that you'd need some equipment even, you know, if you don't have a certain piece of equipment, but you really want to try this new baking technique or this thing that you see on YouTube, like I used to see all the time, or Pinterest or TikTok or whatever it is, you want to try these little things, but you don't want to have to invest in the hundreds of dollars it would take to get all the equipment to do it and try it just one time.

[00:41:19] This is an option. And so that's what I really, really want to get in and create. And it, It's almost impossible for me to do that in my house, so that's why the commercial space is really ideal for that. To have the space to store everything, label everything, have a checkpoint for people to come check things out and then bring them back.

[00:41:35] that's really, really what I'm excited about in opening my new space.

[00:41:40] **David Crabill:** Alright, so this is big news, you know, you're moving into a shop and mean, I saw you allude to that on your social posts, you, changed your business name, I think a few months ago and, and said, you know, big things are coming. So can you first share like, the start of this change, like why did you choose to change your name?

[00:42:00] **Megan Shonka:** The name change was really a matter of like figuring out who we are as a business, like fundamentally. And that had a lot to do with setting up a business plan. I went through a course that was done through a local organization here that helps you, helps women. Figure out business plans and get their businesses rolling.

[00:42:17] And I had been in business for a bit of time, but I knew I needed some really foundational items to be like a professional business and really be polished, have everything in order. And the business plan was part of that. And that was extremely daunting for me. I had, I think, I started and stopped that process like at least three times before I went to this class. In this class, they get you thinking about what are your values? What is your mission? What is the reason that you're doing your business? You know, give us all a backstory. And so you go through that whole process and in doing so, I realized that the name didn't really resonate with me anymore. The name was more something that I had just slapped on it to be like, yep, I'm crafty and I make.

[00:42:54] bakery things, and I like mangoes, so let's throw that out there. So, it used to be Crafty Mango Bakery and in order to get it more in line with what I truly felt the bakery was doing, which was creating joy for people, I thought happy mango sounds much more like what I'm going for. So I changed the name at that point and I knew I wanted to do it then because I had these goals for getting like t shirts made and merchandise and all that sort of thing and I wanted to make sure that whatever name I had at that point was gonna stick.

[00:43:22] It was gonna be the name and since that one didn't resonate with me anymore, I, I switched it up and then that transitioned into changing the logo all over. So Which when I was changing the name and put that publicly on social media, I was in the process of working on the logo change. So it was kind of like just shelling little things out there, giving people a taste of things that were changing coming while all this behind the scenes work was going on and no one could see that part of it, but I was just giving people little hints of things coming.

[00:43:49] **David Crabill:** So let's talk about this new shop of yours. When did you like officially decide, like, okay. I'm gonna take the leap. I'm gonna move in this direction. When do you know you're ready?

[00:44:02] **Megan Shonka:** January 1st of this year. I, it was one of those things. It wasn't really a news resolution. I don't really abide by that. I don't subscribe to those things, but this was the year that I turned a corner and I said, you know, every January I have done this bakery from my home. I have been dead, like, it feels as if no one wants to order anything between Christmas and Valentine's Day.

[00:44:23] There's just crickets. Even though I'd be busy other times of the year, and I thought maybe that's just the industry, or maybe that's just me, I'm not sure. And this year, January was full, and I could not believe it. I was like, what has happened? Where are these people coming from? All of a sudden everyone wants sugar.

[00:44:39] So I, I looked at January and I said, oh my gosh, this is crazy. And I cannot do this in my house anymore. I mean, I'm like busting at the seams. I've got two mixers that stay in my kitchen at all times and they're heavy mixers. So I can't just like store them away in a cabinet and then bring them back out.

[00:44:56] I mean, I already have back issues, so I can't. make that any worse. And I have other equipment that I bring in when I need to. I have baking racks that I bring up when I have giant orders that I have to find places to store. I have limited counter space. I have people that come and help me.

[00:45:09] Like when they're there in the kitchen, I'm almost like okay, you go work in the kitchen. I'm just going to go over here to my laptop and like respond to emails. Cause we can't really be both in the kitchen at the same time. We've tried and it's a little bit. So that was the point at which I realized, okay, I have a lot of orders.

[00:45:24] I have help. So I had extra bodies that are in the space at the same time. I have all these different ideas of things I want to do with growth and more community centric, like with the library and wanting to house the classes and everything else. I'm like, I can't do all this from where I am. I have to expand, which means I have to go find a place.

[00:45:43] And so that was kind of the impetus for. taking this next step of just realizing that I'm bursting at the seams. I can't hold it all in here. And I think

once I take that step, It could just explode because I will finally have the space to like breathe and then I'll be able to just go nuts on everything that I want to.

[00:46:01] **David Crabill:** So have you found a location for your shop already?

[00:46:05] **Megan Shonka:** I have found what I have my eye on. We are in the process of negotiating for the space to see if that's going to pan out.

[00:46:13] And I mean, I'm crossing my fingers that it will, because I've looked at like five, six different spaces from a serious perspective of saying, I think I want this one. I think we can make this work. And then, for one reason or another, it doesn't exactly pan out. It just doesn't line up right with what we're trying to do.

[00:46:27] So this space, I'm hoping Is the thing and that it will be the answer to getting out of the house with the bakery.

[00:46:35] **David Crabill:** Has this process taken quite a bit longer than you expected?

[00:46:40] **Megan Shonka:** Oh my gosh. Yeah. No one tells you how much work, like how much blood, sweat and tears will go into making the transition from being a cottage bakery to being a commercial bakery. And I still don't know everything involved. I'm still at the point where I'm just like in the beginning stages of taking those steps.

[00:46:57] And I know there's a lot more down the road. So I'm kind of bracing for impact, but it is definitely more difficult than I thought it would be. And I was prepared for difficult, but this is like a whole new, this is like birthing a baby. I mean, I've told people jokingly that this bakery is my fourth baby and any woman who understands what it's like to be in your third trimester or let's say your last month of pregnancy and everyone you talk to on the phone asks, is there a baby yet?

[00:47:21] And the first thing you have to say is, nope, no baby yet. And everyone I'm talking to in every realm I'm part of, I'm plugged into so many communities that everyone I, I speak with, they're like, is there a bakery yet? And I have to say, no baby yet. Sorry. It's just not there yet. We're getting there, but it's a, it's a work in progress.



[00:47:36] it is taking a lot more work than I thought there would be, but again. The reason I'm doing it is for reasons way bigger than just me having a business. So that's what keeps me motivated.

[00:47:47] **David Crabill:** So speaking of your kids, you you have three boys, correct?

[00:47:51] **Megan Shonka:** I do.

[00:47:52] **David Crabill:** Yeah, so that's That's a lot, I'd say. I have one boy, and, and he's a lot. So um, how has it been with trying to run this bakery with young kids in the house?

[00:48:06] **Megan Shonka:** One star would not recommend. No, I it's, it's been a challenge. I'm not gonna lie. it has been the reason that I have thought of quitting multiple times. Because I felt very much like as a mom, I was failing them by pursuing this dream. iT's really hard. I mean, if you choose to be a parent and then you also choose to have a business, it's like you have two conflicting worlds, just butting heads. And it's not something that you can foreshadow. Like you can't see that until you're in it. And once you're in it, it's almost like, well, dang, I already committed.

[00:48:40] Like I'm already here. I just stick it out or I don't know, struggle through, I don't know what to do. And I, I am absolutely an expert in no things. I am not an expert at taking care of my kids, even though I have three of them and have had them for multiple years. I'm not an expert at running a business.

[00:48:57] I'm just relying on the love and good graces of those around me, my community, again, trying to help me through, navigate all the stuff that I don't know how to do on a daily basis. So yeah. Hashtag struggle. That's all I can say about that.

[00:49:12] **David Crabill:** There's an interesting comment you made there where you can't know it until you're in it. So, now that you've been in it, Do you look back and wish you had never started the bakery in the first place?

[00:49:27] **Megan Shonka:** No, I don't regret making the decision to do it. Now ask me when I'm on the floor bawling another day and say, do you regret this? And I'll probably be like, yes, I do. I take it back. But no, I don't. the way my brain works anyway, and the fact that I was already like programmed to be an entrepreneur, I don't know that I would have made a different decision.

[00:49:46] Even knowing everything I know now, going back to it, I don't think that would have made a different choice. And I don't regret having made the choice that I do because I'm not just doing this for the sake of my own personal gain. Like showing your kids that there are other options out there besides your typical, like, you know, go find a job at a company someday, work nine to five and then be done and get a certain wage and that's your limit and blah, blah, blah.

[00:50:12] That's a lot of people's life. And if that's what they choose more power to them, if that's what makes them comfortable, I don't want them to think that's all there is. And I want to be able to be a mom that shows them they have other options and there are other ways to be successful. And while it might seem harder.

[00:50:28] In one regard on the other side, there's so many benefits to it. I run my own business, so therefore I do what I want. Like if I don't want to work on a particular day and I don't want to take any orders for a particular day, cause I want to go spend time with my kids or I want to go to an event at my kid's school, I can take off in the middle of the day and go and do that if I want to.

[00:50:46] I have control over that. it's a double edged sword. There's pros and cons to everything. You just have to decide what kind of Pros and cons that you're willing to deal with. And I guess this is mine.

[00:50:57] **David Crabill:** So you've faced some struggles, but I also can see that you make the best of them and one post of yours really stuck out to me, which is when you had a customer that didn't pick up a cake. Can you just share that? I thought it was a really cool story.

[00:51:12] **Megan Shonka:** Yeah, for sure. So that was a cake that I did. So that was towards the beginning of the whole thing. I did not have myself set up to be like run things professionally in a sense of. Knowing when to send someone an invoice and then when to expect payment and you know, What's the proper procedure for pickup and all that?

[00:51:30] I was still learning at that point So I didn't fully know what I was doing and someone had ordered a cake. It was a custom cake It was a sculpted cake So it took a significant amount of time and energy to create and I was in communication with them the entire time Letting them know, you know, here's the day you can pick up.

[00:51:45] Here's how much it's gonna be And they were all, yep. Okay, cool. Sounds good. Great. And I was running behind on a particular day for pickup. And so I had let them know, Hey, I don't think I can get to you tonight, but tomorrow morning work. So I have time to finish. And they were like, yep, sure. No problem.

[00:51:59] And the come the day of them to pick up and I hadn't heard from them and their pickup time had come and went. And I tried contacting them. I tried messaging them, calling them every avenue I had to get ahold of this person. And apparently they just. They blocked me. They ghosted me. They didn't communicate at all that they were going to come.

[00:52:17] They didn't apologize and say, I'm so sorry, I can't get there right now. Can I come later? Like nothing. And I thought, Oh my gosh. I just had the first person that ever just didn't pay me for my work. And I have this whole cake. What am I going to do with this thing? I was pretty devastated. I went through a period of like, Oh, this is so sad.

[00:52:34] How could someone do this to me? But in reality, I kind of did it to myself by not having the proper policies in place of saying you need to pay me half up front. And the remaining is due the day before, you know, all those things that you're told by seasoned bakers, but then you just think that you have good faith in people.

[00:52:49] And in reality, I needed to have Having faith in humanity and people being able to follow through is great, but you need to allow them the opportunity to give you good faith back with the deposit. So, highly recommend that for anyone. But the way that I turned it around was after I was really sad for a while and bummed out that I was, you know, stiffed that money, I turned it around to be a fundraiser.

[00:53:11] So I put a message out to all of my friends and family. I asked them to share it. I said, Listen, this horrible thing just happened, and it's a bummer, and it kinda sucks, but we're gonna make lemons into lemonade and see what we can do. So after I recouped the cost of the cake, the rest of the money that I earned went to a fundraiser for the Ukraine.

[00:53:30] And I basically took the cake, split it up all into slices, I sliced the cake all up, I contacted everyone I knew and said, hey, who wants a piece of cake? It's 3 a slice. And people were messaging me left and right. I mean, I got rid of that cake within 24 hours. It was gone. And I had recouped the cost of my cake.

[00:53:48] I was able to donate \$160 to this organization that was going to help Ukraine at that point. And I felt so much better about the whole thing. I had learned a really heavy lesson from it. But I turned it around and felt like, Oh my gosh, this was great. I felt so good about it. I was like the best mistake I ever made, I guess, because that was like the foundational piece that made me realize I just tapped into the whole reason why I want my bakery to continue to succeed because having this experience of people coming out of the work to help and not just for like.

[00:54:20] Not just for, oh, I wanna help this organization, you're gonna donate money to, but like, I wanna help you because you put in all this work to this thing, and I'm gonna gift you money to then recoup the cost of your cake. There were people that were doing that without realizing I was doing a fundraiser.

[00:54:32] And then I told them, well, thank you for that, but I've already recouped the cost of my cake. I'm just gonna donate your money to this fundraiser. And they said, oh, I didn't realize. That's so great. You know? And this just, this whole turnaround of the community coming together and realizing that there was a bigger cause behind Just a single cake was amazing. So I loved that store and people still today that knew what happened when it happened or like, I just can't believe someone would've done that to you. I'm so sad for you. I'm like, I'm not, I learned a huge lesson, had a great experience turned around from it, and it became the thing that I really realized my bakery was.

[00:55:04] About tapping in a community for, so I think it was, it's a fun story. And I think it was, it turned out to be a good experience.

[00:55:11] **David Crabill:** So as you look into the future, uh, we know you want to open up this shop, but what are the ultimate goals for this business?

[00:55:20] **Megan Shonka:** Well, me and my husband joke that ultimately it's for me to be the sugar mama so he can be a stay at home dad. That's just the side joke. Really I want the business to be able to become a community cornerstone. Like I don't want to have a business just to funnel in a ton of money, which, Not to say that's definitely what's going to happen, but I'd like to be able to get an income from it.

[00:55:39] I'd like to have a salary. I'd like the business to turn enough money over to be able to pay my staff really well, give them benefits and provide a salary for myself so that the three children, the three strong willed boys that I have. Can have a different life than they do right now. And I say that knowing

full well that I'm sure we have privilege that a lot of other people don't have, but we have been financially struggling, in the recent months.

[00:56:04] And a lot of that is from. The constraints that the bakery has. And I mean, you talk about, do you ever feel like you want to quit? And I mean, all the time I have options. I could go find a job anywhere else. And just get a paycheck and actually have money guaranteed to me every single week, instead of crossing my fingers and hoping that we get enough orders to cover my expenses.

[00:56:25] I mean, it's a very different world. And on, the other side of it, just going and being an employee somewhere is definitely more secure than what I'm doing right now. But if all I was going for was a paycheck, I wouldn't have chosen a bakery. So ultimately the goal is to make enough money to provide for my family without the stress of, Oh my gosh, how are we going to buy groceries this week?

[00:56:47] And then be able to provide for other people in the community. And I mean like, the community of my employees. We're all this little tight community of people that get together and have a common interest of baking and having fun and decorating and just enjoying each other's company and supporting each other's lives.

[00:57:02] That's our little community. And then the community of people that we serve, the customers that come by from us regularly and what's going on in their lives and how can we better serve them? I want it to be that. I want to be able to offer the opportunity to have a creative outlet for people that don't have it. You know,

[00:57:18] I almost kind of think of this as the I want to create the business that I would have loved to have been part of when I was younger. I didn't have that kind of creative outlet when I was growing up and trying to figure out who I was as a person and what I was into. I was an artist and I loved being creative and getting involved in things like that, which is why I went into theater in college, because it was where all the weird kids were, you know, and I was one of those weird kids.

[00:57:40] It was just like, I felt like I was at home there. I want to create a home for someone to come who loves decorating cakes and wants to be able to do it for work, but just doesn't know where to go and doesn't know where they're going to feel like they're valued. And that's. this place. I want them to know that this is

[00:57:52] the space that they can come to that they're fully accepted. And I want to accept anyone and everyone who wants to walk into my doors and be part of the community. I want them to come in. That's kind of what I'm building.

[00:58:04] **David Crabill:** Well, Megan, thank you so much for sharing your story with us. Now, if somebody would like to learn more about you, where can they find you or how can they reach out?

[00:58:15] **Megan Shonka:** Well, I'm on social media, or I should say I have pages on social media. I don't manage them because I'm not, like, social media savvy, but the handle is Happy Mango Bakery or @happymangobakery on Facebook and Instagram. And then if you want, you can email me. It's info@happymangobakery.com. So those are the best ways to get ahold of me.

[00:58:36] **David Crabill:** Great. Well, thank you so much, Megan, for coming on the show and sharing with us today.

[00:58:40] **Megan Shonka:** Yeah. Thanks for having me.

[00:58:44] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager Podcast.

[00:58:47] For more information about this episode, go to [forrager.com/podcast/104](http://forrager.com/podcast/104).

[00:58:54] 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.

[00:59:04] And finally, if you're thinking about selling your own homemade food, check out my free mini course where we 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).

[00:59:16] Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.