

# Kristyn Suemnick with Old Oak Sourdough

**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 Kristyn Suemnick.

[00:00:12] But before we begin, I'd like to tell you about the Simply Bread oven. I first heard about this oven when Jenny mentioned it back in episode 74. And as you'll hear today, it's the oven that Kristyn chose for her cottage food bakery. And I can definitely see why. The Simply Bread oven is pretty unique.

[00:00:29] It combines traditional baking techniques with cutting edge technology. So it's both practical and futuristic. You can use it to bake, breads, desserts and more, and it's a workhorse. You can bake up to 15 loaves in just 40 minutes. You can connect it to WiFi. Control each of its three baking decks separately from each other. Plus many more features designed to help you get the perfect bag every single time. And Simply Bread doesn't just do ovens. They have a growing line of high-end baking accessories available

[00:01:01] because their mission is to make the world's highest quality baking products accessible to everyone. So, if you're looking to upgrade your baking game from beginner to professional, They simply have the right products for you. I encourage you to check them out and I think you will be impressed too. To learn more, go to [forrager.com/simplybread](https://forrager.com/simplybread).

[00:01:23] All right. So I have Kristyn on the show today. She lives in Murrieta, California and sells organic sourdough bread with her cottage food bakery, Old Oak Sourdough. Kristyn had long struggled with a gluten intolerance and had not eaten gluten for many years, but once she discovered Authentic Sourdough Bread in 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic, everything changed.

[00:01:45] She made sourdough bread just for her family for over a year and a half, but once she decided to start selling it, her business took off and she hasn't been able to keep up with demand since. In this episode, you'll hear how Kristyn's love for sourdough has turned into a thriving home bakery that allows her to stay at home with her kids and connect even more with her community.

[00:02:06] And with that, let's jump right into this episode.

[00:02:10] Welcome to the show, Kristyn. Nice to have you here.

[00:02:14] **Kristyn Suemnick:** Hey David, thanks so much for having me.

[00:02:17] **David Crabill:** Well, Kristyn, can you take me back to the beginning of your journey? I believe it was before you started your business. How did this whole sourdough thing get started for you?

[00:02:27] **Kristyn Suemnick:** You know, it definitely happened a bit by accident. What's funny is, I have never really been a proper baker of any sorts. I really love savory cooking but honestly, all of my baking experience was really just boxed cake mixes or cupcake mixes for my kids birthdays.

[00:02:46] So it definitely happened by accident, but, my son and I both struggle with some gluten intolerance. And for quite a number of years, I was gluten free and trying to navigate that with a very young toddler. And so, kind of worked through some difficulties with, you know, what all that looks like trying to be gluten free with, with a really young child that, is very hungry.

[00:03:10] And so as I just started to dive into a lot of research, I kept coming back time and again to just Sourdough and that authentic long fermentation process and that so many people that struggle with gluten Unless they actually are celiac most people can tolerate a proper baked loaf of sourdough, and I was really intrigued But I put it off for a few years because, honestly, it just seemed a little overwhelming and I wasn't sure where to start, and then, like so many of us, we found some time in 2020 when things got a little funny, and I was able to work from home a little bit more, and it seemed like a really good time to dive in, and so I really did it. Just to see if my son and I could properly eat bread. And so it all, it all really was rooted from that. And I'm very happy to say that we can.

[00:04:02] **David Crabill:** So it sounds like you were a full participant in the sourdough renaissance of 2020.

[00:04:07] **Kristyn Suemnick:** Yes, absolutely.

[00:04:10] **David Crabill:** And how long had this been going on before you actually jumped in and tried out making sourdough?

[00:04:18] **Kristyn Suemnick:** I started properly making sourdough, I would say, in April of 2020, and it was really just focused on, baking for my own small family. You know, there's four of us, my husband and my two children.

And so, I really just, my goal was just for us to eat real proper bread because even being gluten free for about a decade.

[00:04:38] Gluten-free bread just still has quite a long list of ingredients and I was wanting to kind of get away from that as well, and so I would say April of 2020, we really kind of just jumped in with both feet and, quickly developed a new hobby and passion and just Did all the research that I could find and at that time, since it was kind of the surge of this sourdough renaissance, there wasn't quite the same amount of, you know, resources and tutorials that there are now.

[00:05:08] So I feel like I spent a lot of time looking into that and learning. And so it's neat to see the difference just in a few years how many more bakers are doing this and how many resources there are for so many other people that are feeling that same inclination.

[00:05:21] **David Crabill:** So you said that you had been gluten free for like a decade, so this has been going on for a long time for you.

[00:05:28] **Kristyn Suemnick:** Yes, so glute- free, properly for a decade, and then even to a point of being grain free for about a year.

[00:05:36] And it led me to really learn how to investigate the food that we were eating, really learn how to read nutrition labels.

[00:05:44] Because when you feel like you have, you know, a sensitivity or an allergy, you become really mindful of those things.

[00:05:50] And it was a little challenging to be gluten free, especially about 10 years ago.

[00:05:56] Again, there wasn't kind of the same amount of options that there are now, and there's some good ones. you know, I live in a, pretty well populated area of Southern California. And so we have some nice You know, specialty grocery stores, but even then at the main grocery store where I think most people would go now, there was just like one end cap display of gluten free and there was maybe one or two types of pasta and crackers and I remember just so many times just going to the store and just going to this one little small cubicle and you know going round and round and just wishing like well, I guess there's not that much more to see, like everything that's here is what's gluten free and so it was, it was a lot to learn And it really helped, I was just having kind of some dietary struggles and just some digestion troubles and, you know, saw quite a few doctors and at that time I think even for them it was, they weren't

really sure being gluten free would accomplish much so just kind of navigating those things just from a health need and then learning how to eat a little bit differently And it's fine when you're doing that just for yourself, but then, you know, when you have a family to feed and, you know, little children that are, you know, just starting to eat, it got a little bit more complicated for me.

[00:07:06] **David Crabill:** With you being gluten free for a decade before discovering sourdough. And having very limited options in the stores, did you experiment with trying to bake your own gluten free baked goods?

[00:07:19] **Kristyn Suemnick:** I did. I played around a little bit, but that's where I kind of say that I really wasn't much of a baker, and I think some of that kind of stemmed from just Not having a lot of resources available for gluten free baking, especially right at the start, and so my method of kind of moving forward was more of trying to learn what other foods could I eat and not try to recreate using, Gluten free baking options and so that just for some reason it just seemed a little bit too much of a task to learn

[00:07:49] And so if I did, I was always kind of leaning on like, you know, the boxed items, which are very few and far between, honestly. But it seemed like the best approach.

[00:07:58] **David Crabill:** so you started baking the sourdough during the pandemic like so many other people. And what was that learning process like, and when did you like really fall in love with it?

[00:08:12] **Kristyn Suemnick:** My first loaf that I made seemed very stressful and a lot to learn. Again, just not coming from any kind of really baking experience

[00:08:21] but I remember making my first loaf, you know, it was a whole wheat loaf, and it was extremely dense, and didn't get much of a rise to it, but I remember just being like so proud that I mixed something by hand and put it together and followed some steps and mostly we got like a very nice loaf and especially my son, I mean, he was, oh gosh, I guess he was like five at the time, He was just thrilled I mean, he's kind of my, like, my original fan.

[00:08:49] Everything I make, he loves, and everything I bake, he is just, my biggest fan. And so it really kind of started with that, and I think it's just really satisfying to learn something new and, put the steps in and then actually have it yield a good result, you know? So it was pretty fun.

[00:09:05] **David Crabill:** So it sounds like, as you've imagined throughout your life, potential careers. Baker was definitely not on that list.

[00:09:13] **Kristyn Suemnick:** Oh, definitely not. Definitely not. I've, I've done some different things, in my course of my working life but it's not ever had anything to do with food.

[00:09:23] I grew up riding horses, and that was a huge focus for a long time and I did that, semi professionally for like training. And Breaking horses and then moved into being a veterinary technician, which was what I actually thought I was going to be for my career, was a veterinarian and so I got to enjoy working in that field for about 10 years and then once I had my son and saw just what it was like to have, a new baby and want to spend all my time with him, it was definitely Kind of a pivotal change for my career.

[00:09:54] And so I went more into administration work and I actually worked for my home church, which was just a wonderful family environment and kind of got me a lot more family time. And so I did that for almost 10 years. And then here we are the last couple of years I've been baking. And so it was definitely not on the radar.

[00:10:13] **David Crabill:** So, you were learning sourdough, I'm sure there was a lot of experimentation. How long did it take between the start of the pandemic, when you started making sourdough, to when you actually started to sell some of your bread.

[00:10:29] **Kristyn Suemnick:** yeah, I would say that really for most of 2020, I just kind of learned, you know, this new skill spent a lot of time researching and just learning baking for my family. And then in 2021, as I was baking a lot more, Of course, I happen to have quite a few friends that also struggled with some dietary challenges and many of them were gluten free and so they started asking me so many questions of, you know, I don't understand how you're eating bread and tell me about this because I think they all found themselves in a similar boat that I was in of, we're doing what we think we need to do in the name of health and for our body, but just When you can't have bread, it sounds silly, but like, when you can't have bread, It makes it really hard to go to restaurants and family events and like the list kind of gets to be long because people don't fully understand what it means to be gluten free and so you kind of have these restrictions and so I had so many friends that were just so excited to hear that I was eating bread and what did that look like and could I try making it for them and see how they tolerated it and so that was really kind of where I realized that I think it was something special to offer to somebody else, you

know, it was special enough for me just to be baking for my family, but now I'm hearing these needs from other people, and so I would say kind of during 2021, it just became kind of baking for family and friends, And then at the very end of 2021, I remember we kind of had like a, a special event going on and a few people had asked like, well, if you're coming to this event, like, do you think that you could maybe bake me a loaf and bring it with you? And so to me, that's kind of where it really resonated and stood out of like, okay, I'm being asked to bake something and like bring it and contribute and there's a need.

[00:12:15] And so that was, Actually, just two years ago, properly,

[00:12:19] **David Crabill:** So were you actually selling your bread at that event?

[00:12:23] **Kristyn Suemnick:** No, it was more of it was a vendor event where people were attending but I wasn't set up for a vendor, but just happened to have quite a few close friends going to the same event as well, and I don't know why it kind of turned into. that opportunity of like, Hey, if you're coming this morning, could you bring a loaf of bread with you?

[00:12:40] But it kind of did. So it was more of just, we're all here together and I happened to bring bread and we're all going to have a fun time.

[00:12:48] **David Crabill:** So when did you really start to think, oh, I could turn this potentially into a business?

[00:12:54] **Kristyn Suemnick:** Yeah, it was right around that time, and so kind of when January came about, I think just the feeling of, it's a new year, and what is this opportunity? You know, I wasn't really looking to turn it into a business, but there was definitely some interest, and I was enjoying it so much, and so I remember just thinking to myself, like, maybe if I could bake, 12 loaves a month, you know, just a couple every weekend, like, that would be so exciting to do.

[00:13:20] And so I thought, so that was my goal, like, okay, let's make that my goal. We'll sell 12 loaves a month and it'll just be something fun and extra, because I was still working full time. so again, I wasn't really looking To make this new business, but I was enjoying it so much that it just kind of sparked an interest and so I thought well, let's just give it a try.

[00:13:39] **David Crabill:** Looking back on it, I mean, it sounds like you were experimenting and making sourdough for your family for over a year and a half



before you really looked into turning it into a business. So looking back, do you feel like You wish you had started the business sooner, started sharing it with others and selling it sooner?

[00:13:57] **Kristyn Suemnick:** It's always hard to know. I feel like new seasons come about and new opportunities and sometimes you don't know that something's gonna turn into anything, or not and so I love it so much. I definitely feel like I would have loved to kind of embrace it and step into it sooner.

[00:14:15] But at the same time you know, since I didn't really sit down with this business model plan of like, Okay, I'm gonna launch a bakery and what does this look like? You know, I didn't really have any of that forethought or it just didn't really occur to me that it would And again, I wasn't really necessarily looking for it too, because I was enjoying my work and happy to be in the role that I was at.

[00:14:36] And so it really just kind of just came about so naturally and easily. But that made it also really special then to really start pursuing and see that there was a need for it in our community.

[00:14:49] **David Crabill:** So you started with the goal of 12 loaves a month

[00:14:53] and how did it go? How were the early days? Was it very organic? Did you hit that goal quickly?

[00:15:00] **Kristyn Suemnick:** You know I did and I've always been so grateful. the first month I sold 12 loaves and there's, you know, an area that I've kind of experienced with my baking is I so appreciate all the support and I love being able to provide something of value to everyone and, contributing something to their family table that they're eating and enjoying.

[00:15:20] And so as much of a blessing as it is, it's also been a challenge because literally from kind of the first month in, I have really never been able to fulfill all the requests that there are for baking. And so from a business standpoint, it's been Very encouraging and wonderful to always be maxed out and continue having requests.

[00:15:41] But also my type of personality, it is really hard to feel like I can't meet all the needs that there are, and so it's kind of a double edged sword.

[00:15:52] **David Crabill:** Have the limitations been limits on your time or just limitations on your equipment and space

[00:16:00] **Kristyn Suemnick:** it's really been limitations on time. kind of the beginning of 2022 we had a great opportunity to connect with a local coffee shop and they were putting out these really nice seasonal markets, which was wonderful because I wasn't really looking for a weekly commitment to like a farmer's market, but I really wanted to kind of so I wanted to kind of step into a place where I could get to know our immediate community and so this coffee shop is about a mile and a half away from our house.

[00:16:26] And so they were just doing these really nice seasonal markets and that was kind of my first bigger type of exposure outside of, you know, my friends and family and the people that I was already connected with. And, my first market, I, baked through the night in my Dutch ovens, in my home oven, you know, and I brought 35 loaves.

[00:16:46] And that basically took me, 12 hours of baking and it was hard, and I went there and sold out very quickly. I have a running joke with a friend that always likes to do the math on all of my Market events and so the running tally is that I basically sell an item a loaf a minute and then I'm sold out no matter what I bring.

[00:17:05] It's that's our joke. It's a loaf a minute And so after that first market, I was just so encouraged Enjoyed it so much that I really kind of jumped right in with purchasing proper equipment and really trying to grow my baking ability, but it didn't really change the fact that I still worked full time, and it wasn't a very accommodating schedule for You know, my sourdough schedule.

[00:17:28] And so I worked Monday through Thursday, and so my two days were Friday and Saturday. So I could do all of my dough prep on Friday, do my long fermentation, and bake on Saturday. And so that schedule was really all there was. And so I quickly just just felt so passionate about, well, how much can I make in this, you know, how many loaves can I bake in just really this one baking day opportunity, and so the answer for me was to jump into equipment that would better facilitate that but it didn't really occur to me that I could change my time because, again, I was very happy with my job and, loved the role that I was serving in and so, That was kind of my solution was, well, we better start amping up production and really make this one day count.

[00:18:12] **David Crabill:** and with equipment you were starting with the Dutch ovens, like most people, and what was your next step?



[00:18:19] **Kristyn Suemnick:** I think most bakers can kind of relate. It felt like the next step was to have, you know, a proper baking oven, and so at that time it was primarily, you know, the Rofco that everybody knows and loves. That was also during the time that they were just, you know, on this crazy backorder, and it felt really unattainable to even, you know, get one, and I found myself on the waiting list with Pleasant Hill, just like so many other bakers, and not really knowing what else I could do, so I just kind of dove in and started researching and ended up purchasing a Pico Plus oven that's made by Chandley, and they're in the UK, and so I ordered one of those.

[00:18:58] But again, it was kind of during that time of supply chain challenges, and so I ordered my oven, you know, with the hopes of having it in about eight weeks, and it ended up taking six months. And so, I just kind of felt like I just had this, Carrot dangling in front of my face. I was like, okay, well, I ordered my oven and I really, you know, was anticipating baking a lot more and then I just kind of had to keep playing the Dutch oven shuffle in my kitchen, it actually arrived.

[00:19:25] And so it was a little bit of a challenging six months because I a planner by nature, and so I took a few steps to kind of plan on increased production and committed to a few things that then I still needed to fulfill, but I still didn't really have the equipment to do it for me. So it was definitely a little bit of a tiring six months of shuffling those Dutch ovens around and around, but I think so many of us bakers can relate to that because We find that passion in our home kitchen and, and that's often the avenue for many of us for quite a while, you know.

[00:19:56] **David Crabill:** I'm just curious, how many Dutch ovens did you actually have?

[00:20:00] **Kristyn Suemnick:** I could fit four in my home oven, but I think for whatever reason if I did four I don't think it could quite distribute the heat evenly. So I ended up my, proper number was three and I would kind of rotate them through, and it always felt like a little bit of a loss because it's like, well, I can technically fit four, but I just couldn't get like a proper bake when the oven was, you know, so full to capacity.

[00:20:22] And so three it was, and, you know, a little bit longer bake times in your home oven, like so many people, can relate to. So, to bake three in about an hour is definitely a time commitment.

[00:20:34] **David Crabill:** So what was it like when that oven finally showed up?

[00:20:37] **Kristyn Suemnick:** It definitely was a huge help. It arrived Labor Day weekend. And so I was so excited to have like the long weekend to start baking and practicing. And so got it all set up, but in that time of, like I said, kind of the six months of waiting, business just kind of kept moving forward, and so already, you know, I was so thrilled at the thought of moving from three to six loaves at a time, which is what the Pico Plus can accommodate, at that time, that felt huge.

[00:21:06] then by the time it arrived, you know, I'd kind of outgrown that capacity already, and so it was kind of a hard decision of, do I order another, Pico Plus, and what does that look like, truly, for, you know, shipping time and what will that be? And so kind of in the meantime, it had worked out really well with me being here in Southern California.

[00:21:25] There was a new a great opportunity with a US made bread oven, which is Simply Bread, and they just happened to be about an hour north of me, and I had been in communication with them, but it had seemed like such a big step to get an oven that could bake, 15 loaves at a time.

[00:21:41] Again, I was just a little hesitant because I had never really purposed to start this as a business. I was, I was enjoying it, and I was feeling super passionate about it. And trying to find a way to kind of keep up, but I still wasn't, like, at the point of embracing it as, like, this could really be, like, a full time business.

[00:21:58] And so I was a little hesitant, but I just, knew I needed to make this leap again, because I was trying to capitalize on, how many loaves can I bake for different families, this 48 hour time frame that I have available and so I kind of just decided well I better just make a big step because I took kind of a halfway step with my Pico Plus and still didn't quite have the Abilities that I needed and so I took a big step and purchased a Simply Bread Oven Drove up there, loaded it up and brought it home.

[00:22:27] And so that was within just about five weeks of me getting my first oven. And so I kind of just plunged in and, and had two.

[00:22:35] **David Crabill:** So did you keep the Pico Plus?

[00:22:38] **Kristyn Suemnick:** I did. I considered selling it and kind of played around with that idea, but I just got some really great wisdom from my grandparents. They just said, you know, why don't you hang on to it and just give it six months, hang on to it and if you don't need it, then, then maybe, maybe look at options, but they said you're, if you're as busy as you feel like you'll be, you might really appreciate having two ovens, and I appreciated their wisdom because I was, I felt like I needed to sell it to be able to step into a bigger investment but it's been really helpful to have two ovens, and so I'm grateful that they gave me some good advice.

[00:23:11] **David Crabill:** So you invested in the Simply Bread oven and I know you took it a step further that you now work for them.

[00:23:19] **Kristyn Suemnick:** I do. Yeah, it was, again, it's just always interesting when new opportunities kind of come your way and different seasons of life, and so again, I, you know, I worked for my home church and was really really loving that and had been there for, you know, just about nine years. And so I really wasn't looking for anything different and I have a strong faith and I believe that the Lord kind of brings new seasons and, and new things when it's the right timing.

[00:23:43] And so earlier this year in April I was just feeling a little bit torn of really wanting to continue baking, really wanting to embrace what that might look like as a, proper functioning business that I was able to really throw in all my, time and energy and passion but not really sure how to, you know, how to leave something else that I really loved.

[00:24:01] And since I was local to where Simply Bread is based and where they manufacture here in Southern California and I developed a bit of a relationship with them being a customer and owning an oven it just worked out really well that they invited me to join their staff team and they really wanted to be able to offer the opportunity for bakers to connect with another baker.

[00:24:22] And so it just seemed like the right step forward to dive into this new found passion and where I was spending a lot of time and energy. And so it was a, it was a hard change personally, you know, to move from one job that you really love and feel called to do and to move into something else that you also feel really passionate about.

[00:24:41] So personally, it felt like a very big life transition and it definitely came with a lot of stress and definitely some tears of just kind of feeling conflicted on. Um, I'm just something new, but ultimately it seemed like the

right thing to do and I do believe that, it's good to be stretched and try new things and be challenged.

[00:25:00] And so it just felt like a really great opportunity. And so I have been officially on their staff team since April and it's been a really unique opportunity. I feel like my driving passion of sourdough While I love sourdough, and I love baking, and I love what that actually looks like, I love connecting with the people that I'm providing my sourdough for.

[00:25:20] I love people, and it's kind of the same part that resonates with working with Simply Bread. I love connecting with other bakers, and trying to be that source of encouragement for them, you know, because we're all kind of finding this new passion and seeing that we can maybe turn in a baking business into a proper business that helps support our families.

[00:25:38] And so it's just been a really neat way to connect with other bakers and hear their stories, hopefully offer some wisdom and help to them. But also it just kind of develops our own little baking community, and it's it's a really great community.

[00:25:53] **David Crabill:** Yeah, and doing a little bit of research on your business, I definitely saw that theme of a lot of collaboration, a lot of connection. So what are some of the other ways that you integrate community into your business.

[00:26:06] **Kristyn Suemnick:** Oh, I appreciate you noticing that because it really is kind of what I would consider the cornerstone to my business is I think You know, some things you just don't know until you're exposed to them. And so I have learned and discovered so much value of getting back to just this local support of supporting local businesses, being involved in the local community and what that looks like.

[00:26:30] something I've had to learn, you know, I mean, I was used to just kind of going to the grocery store for my food and. It actually was my own lesson of, I'm selling my sourdough and people are willing to, drive past the store and come all the way to my home and pick it up for me directly.

[00:26:46] And that's a very special thing. And so I started to just try to turn that around for my own self, and what does that look like for how I like to support other people, and so it's been really kind of a journey of just how do I support local, how do I find other families that are pouring their heart and soul into what they do, And how can we kind of rally and be a community together?

[00:27:10] And so it's definitely been a learning curve, but I've loved it. And I have found that there's so much value in the local community. And so many families are working hard in their area that they love and that they're skilled and gifted at.

[00:27:24] And so it's kind of just brought Like minded connections. Like I said, I have a wonderful relationship with our local coffee shop. They're called Montague Brothers, and they are very community oriented, and I have really learned and gleaned from them on what that looks like, and so to be able to, you know, work with them, like I said, it kind of started with their seasonal markets, and then just this year, actually, They were willing to join with me to be, you know, like my first proper like retail partnership that I can sell my sourdough through them.

[00:27:56] And so it's just been all these little stepping stones and so through that, I feel like you just get exposed to this whole other community of people that are trying to do the same. And so you know, I'm trying to buy local coffee and local ingredients for my bread. And that in turn has just helped me connect and meet people that are.

[00:28:14] In this similar vein you know, like I have a local family that they're beekeepers and I buy my honey from them and, you know, so it all just kind of, once you get going you just kind of start meeting people that are trying to do the same accomplishment in their particular way. And so I just work really hard on trying to foster those relationships and get to know those families behind them and then work together.

[00:28:36] You know, I've got several businesses that we've collaborated for, holiday gift boxes to kind of put our items all together. so things like that, it just gets to be really fun.

[00:28:47] **David Crabill:** Well, speaking of ingredients, you know, not only do you source locally, but your ingredients themselves are are pretty unique. So can you describe a little bit about what makes your bread and your sourdough unique?

[00:28:59] **Kristyn Suemnick:** Thank you. Yeah, you know, like I said earlier, I've spent the last few years just trying to learn about whole proper foods and getting back to just really what that looks like. And it all just kind of, to me, goes hand in hand with learning how to shop local and get local produce and just getting back to the basis of everything is.

[00:29:17] Real ingredients, and so for me, that is how I cook and bake for my family, and so I just don't feel like I can offer anything different, to the families that I'm baking for and so that's kind of become my business model as well. This is where I find value for my family and so I want to pass this value on, to you as well.

[00:29:35] And so I work really hard on sourcing all of my ingredients to be organic because that really means a lot to me. So I'm grateful for all of the farmers and millers that are coordinating their efforts to be able to provide organic flour and grain. And so from just a quality standpoint, I really love Central Milling.

[00:29:56] And, of course, being in California, it kind of helps as well because they're close by in Utah and they have a California location as well up in, you know, Northern California. And so they're able to deliver to me. With pallets, so I am appreciative that I can get such quality flour but also on a proper scale of, for where the level I'm baking at, you know, I get a pallet of a thousand plus pounds of flour, delivered at once which is pretty funny when I think about it, you know, I was afraid to have flour in my house when I was gluten free and now I literally have a closet that's stacked with a thousand pounds of flour. So they've been a wonderful resource. I really am trying to source regional California grains as well to mill those to be able to offer fresh milled flour and all the nutrients that come with that. And then all of my flavored loaves when I like to do special flavors, I just really kind of start at the base of.

[00:30:50] What can I make that is tasty, but also still kind of let these true minimal ingredients kind of shine through for their flavor and so I just kind of layer that of, you know, what sounds good to me, what is the cleanest, best ingredients I can use for it, and let's, let's turn this into a delicious loaf.

[00:31:09] **David Crabill:** Wow. A pallet of a thousand pounds of flour. How long does that take you to go through now?

[00:31:17] **Kristyn Suemnick:** I'm going through a thousand pounds in about three months, so it is fairly significant. But it's also been really nice too, because again, you know, from a business perspective, I've tried to get a little bit creative too on, partnering with other local businesses, and so again, it's like I'm making this really large flour shipment, but now I ask the coffee shop like, hey, Can I help order your flour?

[00:31:43] And, saves on all this extra shipping. And, you know, so just trying to find those connections. And so now we coordinate on our flour orders. And



so that helps, you know, with shipping prices and just the more you can order at once, obviously, the less there is on shipping. And so it's definitely Been interesting to learn how to order food like this on a bulk scale but also get through it quickly so that it's staying, you know, optimal freshness and not just, you know, sitting in storage.

[00:32:10] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I mean, a few hundred pounds of flour per month, that's quite a lot, and I did see that you now invested in like a 50 quart mixer. I mean, this is a, this is a pretty huge mixer.

[00:32:23] **Kristyn Suemnick:** Yes, yes, I, have loved the opportunity of working with Simply Bread because it's allowed me to work remotely from home but it is a little bit of a balance because, of course, I still have. all of my commitments to Simply Bread to fulfill in a day so again, it still keeps coming down to the question of, well, if I'm only going to bake twice a week, how can I optimize my time and For me, the answer just keeps being, well, step into equipment that can help you accomplish this, you know, in less days because I, still haven't stepped into fully baking, you know, as my primary business yet.

[00:33:00] And so I first purchased a smaller mixer, but I definitely undersold myself on what I thought I was able to do and so very quickly I realized I needed something bigger and so I just kind of thought, you know what, I don't want to keep, you know, buying multiple pieces of equipment and so I just kind of dove in and I got a 50 quart Estella it is kind of funny because it is It's very large, it has also left permanent dent marks in my wood floor from where I push it from our office where we kind of store everything during my non baking days and I have this little track now from the office into the kitchen and I didn't really expect that.

[00:33:39] So, fun things that you learn as a cottage bakery when you have really large equipment running through.

[00:33:45] **David Crabill:** I was thinking about that, like with this enormous mixer, you've obviously got oven. Like how does this all fit into your home, right? Like I don't know, is your kitchen just a very large kitchen?

[00:33:57] **Kristyn Suemnick:** You know, not necessarily. We have a single story home and it's not exceptionally large. It's very comfortable for our family. And I definitely had to get creative with space. And so my husband very graciously has offered up his office. And first, you know, at first it didn't seem too bad. We just had, one larger kind of oven, but it was

[00:34:19] strange, but you know with my Pico Plus and we just kind of parked it in, you know, the front dining room. My kitchen is kind of on the other side of the dining room. Just it shares a wall. And so I would leave it parked in the dining room and then just wheel it around into the kitchen on, bake days.

[00:34:34] And that seemed reasonable and, but then again it came a second oven and then of course a fridge and now the mixer and of course all my, actual Bannetons and, just functional packaging. And so our front room truly has turned into bakery storage. And it looks like a bakery. And so even every week when I have customers come and pick up, if it's their first time, you know, they come to my door and, and they're like, oh my gosh, like that's your oven.

[00:35:01] It's like, yeah, this, front room has really turned into like a proper bakery. So. I love it, though, because I just feel like this is my passion, this is what I enjoy, and so we might as well just have it kind of part of our home. So, it has definitely, though, there's a trickle. I mean, it's, the kitchen has certain things that stay there permanently, the dining room has, all the large equipment, and then now, I have overflow into the office with my, dedicated fridge, and storing all my large, proofing containers, and it definitely has a little bit of a domino effect.

[00:35:34] **David Crabill:** So it definitely is taking over your home. Have you thought about potentially moving beyond your home?

[00:35:42] **Kristyn Suemnick:** I have and there's, definitely some exciting Considerations for that, but also one of the things that I love about baking is the ability to do it from home. I think it brings a little bit of a different connection for people. And I notice that kind of time and again when I get to you know, there was a certain time where I knew all of my customers just already from our overlapping circles of life and then I could kind of tell when I started getting, you know, this influx of, I started getting orders of like, oh wow, I don't,

[00:36:12] I don't know them yet, but I'm excited to get to know them and when they come and pick up at my home, I think it just kind of fosters a different connection.

[00:36:20] Just kind of like when you have a meal with somebody at their home, I think it kind of instantly bombs you in a different way and it, I see that carryover with baking for people and having them pick up. Cause I think it kind of gives them a little You know, snapshot into my life. I mean, they're coming to my house and standing in my doorway and, usually my kids are, running by and so I think there's just something really special about being a cottage food

baker and sharing something from your home, but also, I definitely see that there's constraints to your personal home.

[00:36:54] This year has been interesting for me because I've always had this huge desire to be home. And really ever since my children were born, I've always worked outside the home. And so I've always had this huge desire to work from home and be home more and this year that has happened, but it's been a very interesting transition because it is interesting working from home, running a baking business from your home.

[00:37:18] And then trying to be home like you would normally it can't help but just kind of become part of everything that we do. I mean, even my kids will joke, you know, oh mama can't go do that because she has to feed her sourdough starter, you know. So, it is hard to have certain things just woven into your daily life, but I also think that's where some of the beauty is.

[00:37:40] **David Crabill:** So we haven't really talked yet about what you sell. Obviously you sell sourdough but what does your menu look like?

[00:37:49] **Kristyn Suemnick:** Yeah, so my focus is definitely a hundred percent long fermented sourdough. And again, that just comes from with me learning what my body best tolerated was having this long fermented, proper sourdough made with organic ingredients. And so I want to be able to offer that for all of my customers, especially for anyone that's having any kind of dietary sensitivity.

[00:38:13] I want to offer, if they can eat my classic sourdough loaf, then I want to make sure that if they order another item that they're gonna have the same type of experience, ideally. so that's kind of my goal. So I started really with my main classic sourdough loaf, and then I have just tried to take that as my foundation, and then move forward into introducing other flavors.

[00:38:36] And for a long time I only did proper sourdough loaves, but this year I've incorporated sourdough cookies like a sourdough sweet cake and so having something to offer on a little bit of the sweeter side, but It all has to work in line with, you know, a 24 hour fermentation and making sure that I can source all these ingredients just the most thoughtfully way that I can.

[00:39:00] And so it's been interesting and then I have a lot of ideas for my menu I feel like this has kind of become my avenue of creativity that I didn't really know that I had with menu ideas and different bakes, but again, just kind

of trying to balance that with not quite having enough time in the day to bring all those things into fruition.

[00:39:20] So. I try to offer different loaf flavors every week, you know, I open up a specific menu for every week and that's how my customers are able to order. And so I try to highlight those different flavors and kind of cycle them through so that everyone is getting what they're most looking forward to and just trying to balance that with kind of some fun.

[00:39:40] You know, sweets and so I'm hoping that as I may start to have more time, I definitely have a lot of excitement for other things. I, I feel like I have a, you know, a mile long of all the ideas that I'd love to bake for, but I just don't quite have the ability to execute it right now.

[00:39:56] **David Crabill:** So what led you to change up the menu on a week to week basis? Was it, you know, to try to add scarcity or sell more each week or was it just to kind of mix it up and make it a little bit more fun for you?

[00:40:10] **Kristyn Suemnick:** think a little bit of a few of those, thoughts I started to learn, because again, I feel like I've had to learn. Something every month of my baking journey. I feel like every month presents something new and since I really just again, I've never really sat down with this like plan to roll out, this bakery.

[00:40:29] It's just every month. It's like well, I have all these requests. I have all these orders. I'm trying to learn, I'm learning as I'm going and I A year ago, I definitely felt like I finally kind of had a realization of, okay, I need to learn how to streamline for my own self so that. I didn't want baking to become stressful.

[00:40:49] I wanted to enjoy it because that's why I'm doing it. You know, I have all this wonderful love and passion for it, but I was noticing that, you know, as I would develop my menu, I would add a new flavor, and it used to just be that customers could just, put in a request for whatever loaf of their choice, but then that started to look like, I would make five or six classic loaves and then I would have a couple dark chocolate loaves and jalapeno cheddar and, and it got to be where it was really hard to plan and streamline.

[00:41:19] And so I kind of realized I need to adjust. what this looks like for baking on a scale, and I need to know what I'm planning for and not be running for ingredients for five or six different things, and so I at the beginning of January of last year, I really just dove into how do I streamline a menu.

[00:41:37] How do I still get everyone what they're hoping for, but how do I maintain some organization over it? And so, that's where I started to lean into this, you know, weekly menu, where I would usually focus on two flavors, and then maybe something fun like cookies should my time allow for it. And that, for me, really, Helped just my mental capacity of planning for my bake days.

[00:42:00] I could just say, okay, well, we've got these two loaves, I've got these ingredients, and I'm gonna do one full mix in my mixer this flavor, and then I'll do a second mix of this flavor. And it just really took away kind of a lot of like decision fatigue, I guess, is what it would come down to.

[00:42:16] And then it is fun. I think I will plan the menu kind of around some personal preferences and or if I haven't had, a certain loaf in a while or if my kids are really hoping for a certain flavor, then that might impact my menu a little bit but I think it keeps it exciting and I also wanted to encourage people so many of us like to order our favorite thing, Which I definitely am subject to, as well, but I really wanted to encourage people to try something new, and hopefully find out that that's now their new favorite, and then this is their new favorite, and then at the end of the day, whatever, whatever was coming out on the menu, ideally everyone would appreciate that flavor, and I found that to be helpful as well.

[00:42:55] people would try something new just because That was what was on the menu, but they definitely wanted sourdough that week, and so they would try it. And then I would get feedback that they loved it. And so it definitely met a lot of needs.

[00:43:08] **David Crabill:** You've mentioned your sourdough cookies, and I feel like you're the first person on the podcast that makes sourdough cookies. Did you have to do a lot of experimentation to get those to come out right?

[00:43:22] **Kristyn Suemnick:** Yeah, you know what I kind of find for myself since I am not like a properly trained Baker, you know, in the sense that I didn't go to culinary school, and I, didn't, learn these things in a formal education. my method is kind of, I take a lot of inspiration that's around me, and I don't know how to take a recipe just completely from scratch and build it from the ground up.

[00:43:45] But what I'm really good at is starting with something as a baseline and understanding how that recipe works and then starting to kind of tailor it. And I feel like before I was baking, that's kind of how I would cook. Like, I

would always start with, you know, a proper recipe from somebody that, understands recipe development and can put forward a really strong recipe.

[00:44:04] But then I feel like my own, personal preferences and personal creativity kind of then can piece it apart and rebuild it a little bit.

[00:44:13] So I was really interested actually, Annie Clapper, she also owns a Simply Bread Oven and she has she's just a wonderful resource. She actually shared about her vegan sourdough cookies, and I was just interested because I do bake for a lot of families that have some dietary struggles, and so I thought, well, you know I'm not really a vegan based eater, but I can appreciate that for people that have sensitivities, and so I thought, well, I'm kind of curious about About this, and so I started with her cookie recipe but then just personally found out, you know, I'm not really quite looking for a vegan recipe myself and so it's like, well then what does it look like if I reintroduce butter, and what does it look like if I, you know, swap out for my favorite flour, like I really love kind of my very special grain of choice is spelt grain.

[00:45:02] It's what I first reintroduced to my diet since it's a low, it's a naturally lower gluten grain. It's an ancient grain and I just am personally very, very partial to this grain. And so that's really kind of my fresh milled grain of choice that I spend a lot of time with in my baking. And so I started to look into, well, how can I introduce a spelt flour and what does that do to the recipe? And so, I guess at the end of the day, I am able to kind of deconstruct and kind of rebuild My recipe to achieve what I'm hoping to. And again, if I'm going to be offering an item, I want to be able to offer it fully long fermented.

[00:45:41] And so, you know, I make the cookies at least 24 hours ahead of time and they ferment slowly and sit in the fridge. And I'm, I do longer when I'm able to, you know, up to a 48 hour ferment. And so I find that combination of just a long fermentation. Fresh milled grain, and then like I said, I can't really forfeit butter because I just really love it.

[00:46:02] So they do have butter in them, but they don't have egg, and so they end up being kind of a thin, really flavorful cookie. They're not overtly sweet but they're very flavorful, and so they're definitely a very unique cookie.

[00:46:17] **David Crabill:** So what have you found has Spend some of your best sellers?

[00:46:22] **Kristyn Suemnick:** I would say that my jalapeno cheddar is a very, very popular loaf. People really love the combination of the spicy jalapenos and



I like to leave all the seeds in to really kind of pack that punch. So that's been very, very popular. I also make sourdough focaccia that is a favorite. You know, honestly, I would say a lot of my flavors just kind of hit different taste preferences.

[00:46:46] And so I have, kind of a strong following for each flavor that I offer. But at the core of most of my baking since, again, most of my baking kind of starts and revolves around baking for my own family I mean, I love sweets as much as the next person, but for my baking, I actually don't really focus on a lot of sweetness because I'm offering it to my kids, and I, I want to be able to say, if it's 7 o'clock in the morning and you want to have a cookie, That's okay because I know that it's packed full of really good quality ingredients and it's not gonna really give you this huge sugar high

[00:47:18] So that's kind of my MO for all of my recipe development is how can I bring some really great flavor but not have a ton of sugar but still embrace those things like a lot of recipes, like you have to have proper sugar and you have to have some proper butter. And so I'm all about that, but just really trying to balance.

[00:47:34] juSt nutrition and kind of again, if I can feed it to my six year old and my nine year old at, breakfast, lunch, or dinner, or dessert, then I feel pretty good about it.

[00:47:45] **David Crabill:** So I see you offer a subscription for your regulars.

[00:47:49] **Kristyn Suemnick:** I do. That's been a really wonderful addition to what I've been offering, and again, It kind of came with the opportunity of being able to be home a little bit more and carve out a second day of baking. And so I really wanted to accomplish a couple of things with that. my menu does sell out very quickly, every week, and I'm so grateful for it, but again, I feel so terrible for the people that weren't able to get in their order.

[00:48:15] And so at the beginning of summer I thought, you know, I see a lot of bakers offer a subscription, so there must be something to it. And I thought this might be a really great way to kind of introduce another bake day, because at that point I was still only, prepping and baking Friday and Saturday.

[00:48:31] That's just kind of my ingrained rhythm. And so I thought, well, let's see if we can carve out another bake day. What does that look like? I would love to be able to pivot for people, you know, I bake for so many families that

just I use my bread as their foundational, you know, my classic loaf is their foundation for their family, and they eat it all week long.

[00:48:50] So I thought, well, if I can make a special bake day to better serve these families and make sure that they get their classic loaf, and that they don't have to battle the menu every week because I know that they're using it for all of their bread needs. that was kind of my goal for both.

[00:49:06] It's like, how can I better serve my families that are kind of relying on my bread and then how can I carve out some time for myself to bake more, and then how can I free up my menu to hopefully reach a few other families, so that was kind of the trifecta of bringing on subscriptions, and it has been a, A really great method.

[00:49:26] I paused them for the month of December, just because it's such a full month, and my customers were so sad that I wasn't offering them. I'm glad to know that it's something that has struck value for them as well. But I would encourage anybody that's baking and that has regular customers, I think it's a really helpful model.

[00:49:44] it also just kind of brings again like another layer of relationship. So, every main bake day, I get quite a mixture of, current and recurring customers. I get new customers that I've never met before I don't get to say hi to everybody. I love to and I try to, but everyone's schedules are different when they come and pick up and so I don't necessarily get to see everybody every week, but I feel like offering subscriptions it has grown, you know, my first month, I specifically, I guess 12 is my favorite number, you know, I started off with only making, only wanting to make 12 a month, and so I don't know why 12 is like my favorite, but when I first introduced my subscriptions, I thought, well, I would love to just make 12, so it can be a light bake day, I can just kind of dip my toe in, see what it's like, and it has grown, pretty significantly since, June, and so I love seeing that it meets a need but I love seeing those families consistently every single week I don't know, it just kind of fosters a different connection, and so that's just as important to me, on the flip side of the actual baking, so I definitely recommend it.

[00:50:45] **David Crabill:** So you've got high-end ingredients, organic, locally sourced. You have this long fermentation period, which adds complexity. And these are. Even more diet specific breads than even a traditional sourdough. So, what does your pricing end up looking like?

[00:51:03] **Kristyn Suemnick:** It's been definitely something to learn how to establish proper pricing, and it's definitely an area that I've needed a lot of encouragement because I think it can be hard. I think on one hand, since I started off knowing, like, all of my customers at first were already connected to me.

[00:51:19] They were friends. They were, friends of friends. They were, fellow people at church. Like, I felt so conflicted on how do I charge you for something that I love making and I love you, but if this is going to be a business, like, How do I balance that? And I was actually really grateful for a few specific people that just flat out said, you need to raise your prices.

[00:51:41] Like, we appreciate you, you are working hard, and this does not reflect, your price does not reflect the quality that you're putting out. And I was so grateful for them taking such a strong voice and saying that to me. And I can appreciate it too, I mean I would hope that friends can see they know me, they know the type of person I am and so it really helped me, and so I definitely had to take a step forward and increase my prices, and then I had to learn how to be confident in that and I just had to remind myself, you know what, this is important, and I am taking all these links, and I am spending a tremendous amount of time in every way of researching and ordering and organizing and, and then actually baking.

[00:52:25] And so I have been able to find a pricing structure that I feel is fair, And so, most of my loaves run anywhere from \$14 to \$16.50. And it really just is driven by the type of ingredients that are in them.

[00:52:41] And for example, you know, we've just come through the fall holidays. And pumpkin is, of course, always a fun flavor to incorporate but the last couple years for anybody that's baking with, you know, organic canned pumpkin, it can be a little bit hard to find and it can be a little bit pricey. And so just kind of learning how to incorporate that properly into my pricing, I think, is important.

[00:53:03] And for any baker, you know, that's having to do that. So all my loaves are just under two pounds. So they're a very robust and large loaf. And so I feel like you're getting a wonderful, quality and size and then, the support for the baker doing all the work. So that's kind of how I've navigated my pricing structure.

[00:53:22] **David Crabill:** You also live in Southern California where prices are higher in general, you're now about \$15 per loaf. What did you start out at?

[00:53:33] **Kristyn Suemnick:** I started out, and again, it was short lived I started out being closer to \$10, like \$10 to \$12 and that's really where I had friends just be very kind and, and just kind of speak truth to me that, no, we think what you're doing is, is more. And so I took a lot of value from that, and hopefully we're all surrounded by people that love us and that can kind of help.

[00:53:54] Be a voice for us if you're starting your own business, in whatever capacity

[00:53:59] because at the end of the day you know, this still might not be my primary job, but it is a significant amount of work and effort.

[00:54:06] And I think for anyone that has their own personal business, it can be fairly all consuming. I mean, I often apologize to my husband. I'm like, I'm sorry that we've talked about sourdough for three years straight. Like, it is all consuming when you're kind of putting your heart and soul into something.

[00:54:23] And so, I think you just, need to be able to represent yourself fairly with what that pricing looks like. And of course, there's the benefit of baking from your home where you don't necessarily have some of the same type of overhead.

[00:54:35] But, to be honest, like, when I really look back on some of my investments, like, I've invested in proper bakery grade equipment and you know, I might not have a lease for a storefront, but I still have, the mortgage for my home and my electrical costs and for running my ovens and, you know, all those different things that are still outside of ingredient costs.

[00:54:56] So I think it's a really layered, layered structure that you have to kind of think about. when you put together your pricing, but I so appreciate everyone's support with it.

[00:55:06] **David Crabill:** So as you look into the future what are your plans? Where would you like to see this go?

[00:55:12] **Kristyn Suemnick:** as this year is kind of coming to a close and being able to bake more this year than I've ever been able to bake, especially really the last six months, I would say is when I've really been able to have the flexibility to really kind of push some of my personal boundaries of like, what does it really look like to bake for business?

[00:55:29] Because sometimes I'm finding until you actually do it, you don't really know what to expect. And so for me, I'm baking twice a week which really looks like four days, from dough preparation and fermentation to bake time. So, four days of my week are dedicated to baking. And It is strenuous actually to bake at this kind of scale and there are certainly bakers that are baking on a higher scale than myself.

[00:55:56] So, I mean, I'm not at all the standard, but had to learn physically what it's like to, you know, have hundreds of pounds of dough going. It is physical. It is a little bit challenging. It's so, Much cleaning and dishes but it is just part of it, and I, I love every part, and so I would love to really dive in further again, I've just gotten some wonderful support from the community and just different connections that are kind of coming together and so I think I'm finally kind of letting myself dream about what it, what would it really be to just bake and let Old Oak Sourdough just kind of grow because I feel like really from day one, I've kind of just had this, bottleneck that I'm just kind of keeping my, fist closed around.

[00:56:43] I'm like, well, I can bake this much, but not anymore. And I'm trying to find, just that confidence of moving into, Like, what if I just could bake and really pursue this avenue, and what would that look like? And so I think I'm really excited to see what that might look like,

[00:56:59] so I'm excited for this coming year, and I'm hoping that it means more baking and just reaching more families and making new friendships, and all that goes into it, because That's really the other huge driving force is just, I love the connections that come along with it.

[00:57:15] **David Crabill:** So could you see yourself having a brick and mortar someday, or do you just see yourself potentially baking full time out of your house?

[00:57:23] **Kristyn Suemnick:** right now I'm set up to do a pretty significant volume through my home. I think if I really admire all these bakers that move from a cottage food operation into a brick and mortar, and I'm so grateful for them you know, for those that are kind of sharing what that looks like, and I To be perfectly honest, when we drive through our little section of kind of our historic downtown area of my town in Murrieta, you know, I look at the little shops that, that are there and I see, For lease signs and, and I think about it.

[00:57:52] I think, wow, that would be really exciting. But then I also realize, well, that would take me right back out of the home. And my children are still,

pretty young, nine and six. And I really want to be home and just enjoy our family time.

[00:58:06] So I definitely see ideas, and I get inspired, and I think about what that might look like, and I have a lot of encouragement from customers and friends, like, oh, I think you should open a storefront so we'll see.

[00:58:18] I've learned not to say no, because I never would have seen myself baking in the first place. So, I really think anything really can happen. So, we'll just see. We'll see what the season and new opportunities bring.

[00:58:30] **David Crabill:**

[00:58:32] Well Kristyn thanks so much for coming on and sharing your story. Now, if people would like to learn more about you, where can they find you or how can they reach out?

[00:58:42] **Kristyn Suemnick:** Yeah, I love to connect with other people

[00:58:44] I am on Instagram as @oldoaksourdough, and so that's probably the best place to find me.

[00:58:51] Once you find me there, then you can kind of get connected in other ways, but I think social media makes it pretty nice to connect that way. I do have my website, Old Oak Sourdough. I've been really grateful that all of everything around my name has been able to be secured, so if you can remember Old Oak Sourdough, you can pretty much find me anywhere.

[00:59:09] **David Crabill:** Awesome. Well, thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today.

[00:59:14] **Kristyn Suemnick:** Thanks so much, David, I really appreciate it.

[00:59:18] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager podcast.

[00:59:21] For more information about this episode, go to [forrager.com/podcast/105](https://forrager.com/podcast/105).

[00:59:27] And if you're enjoying this podcast, please take a quick moment right now and leave me your view on Apple Podcasts. It doesn't have to be a



longer review, but it's truly the best way to support this show, and it'll help others like you find this podcast.

[00:59:40] And finally, if you're thinking about selling your own homemade food, check on my free mini course where I walk you through the steps you need to take to get a cottage food business off the ground. To get the course, go to [cottagefoodcourse.com](http://cottagefoodcourse.com). Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.