

# Marci Larson with Kahler's Cakes

**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 Marci Larson. But really quick, I wanted to check, have you created a website for your business yet? And if you have, do you pay for it?

[00:00:19] A lot of entrepreneurs still think they need to spend money to get a good website, and that is simply not true anymore. I am a really big fan of Square Online. That's what I use for my Fudge Business website, And I created a free tutorial that will walk you through how to set up a totally free website in less than one hour.

[00:00:38] And in case you think free also means cheap, it's actually quite the opposite. I think Square Online is hands down the very best website tool for most cottage food businesses. So if you want to learn more, you can watch my free tutorial by going to [forrager.com/website](http://forrager.com/website).

[00:00:54] All right, so I have Marci Larson on the show today. She lives in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and sells baked goods, canned goods, and other items with her cottage food business, Kahler's Cakes. For many years, Marci thought about selling her baked goods, and she finally took the leap in 2019 and started selling to family and friends, but things really took off when she sold out at her first event a couple years later, and she hasn't looked back since. Over the past few years, she's sold at dozens of different events year round and now sells wholesale as well. Marci's only regret? Not starting her business sooner. So if you've been on the fence about getting your cottage food business off the ground, hopefully this episode will inspire you to start selling sooner than later.

[00:01:41] And with that, let's jump right into this episode. Welcome to the show, Marci. Nice to have you here.

[00:01:48] **Marci Larson:** Thanks for having me.

[00:01:51] **David Crabill:** Can you take me back to the beginning of your journey? How did it all get started?

[00:01:55] **Marci Larson:** Well, I've always kind of been a designated baker. I've always kind of had that in me like, hey, I want to bake cookies when I was little. So I was always just kind of in the kitchen and then, we'd always do

potlucks wherever I was working. So I just kind of bring in desserts, whatever I could think of.

[00:02:15] And eventually I just started selling it. And then when I met my now husband, he's like, Hey, you should really like sell this stuff. So I just dove in headfirst and now we're here.

[00:02:25] **David Crabill:** And about what year was that that you started considering opening a business?

[00:02:31] **Marci Larson:** This is my third year.

[00:02:34] **David Crabill:** So you started in 2019?

[00:02:38] **Marci Larson:** Yes, the Facebook page kind of became like a food blog. people started reaching out to me and were like, Hey, can we like buy this stuff? And I was like, sure,

[00:02:48] **David Crabill:** Yeah, because I saw your Facebook page started, I think, back in 2015. So what were your ambitions when you started that?

[00:02:58] **Marci Larson:** Just have like turn a hobby into something that could make some money on the side. And now it's kind of a full blown business.

[00:03:07] **David Crabill:** So, when you started the Facebook page in 2015, had you thought about starting your business sooner?

[00:03:17] **Marci Larson:** Yeah, I pretty much the word through family and friends, and then it built from there.

[00:03:23] **David Crabill:** What were those four years in there before you actually took the leap to starting your business?

[00:03:30] **Marci Larson:** Just kind of spreading the word through Facebook. You know, I'd put stuff on like, My page and friends would share it or people would text me that had had stuff from like work Outings and we're like, hey, can you make this for us sometime?

[00:03:46] **David Crabill:** You started in 2019, started selling. Looking back, is there part of you that wishes you had started your business sooner?

[00:03:54] **Marci Larson:** I wish I would have gone the correct routes, but now it's just come together as it's supposed to.

[00:04:03] **David Crabill:** Can you expand on that a little bit? What do you mean by the correct routes?

[00:04:09] **Marci Larson:** Like I don't have a website. I don't really plan on having a website. I know a bunch of, you know, almost every other business does. I just really kind of use Facebook and a little bit of Instagram, but I just wish that I would have been able to like get the word out a little quicker.

[00:04:25] **David Crabill:** Well, a lot of businesses just have Facebook pages and they do quite well at building their businesses from just that. Do you feel like Not having a website held you back?

[00:04:34] **Marci Larson:** Not really. I mean, Since I've started doing farmer's markets, it's really Blown into this big thing that keeps me super busy. It's been awesome just doing Facebook and social media.

[00:04:49] **David Crabill:** Well, it sounds like you had the talent, the skill, the interest in baking. What would you say were your motivations for trying to turn this hobby into a business?

[00:05:01] **Marci Larson:** I've just always kind of had a knack for doing desserts or sweet breads and cinnamon rolls and stuff. So it's just kind of been like, hey, what can I do to make this further, it's kind of a passion thing. So it's like, what can I do so that I can do this more instead of just having my family and friends be like, Hey, here's, two cakes that I did or cupcakes or whatever.

[00:05:25] So, it's really helped me expand to actually selling stuff.

[00:05:29] **David Crabill:** And if you can think back to when you started the business or, or, had visions for starting it, what did you think the business would become? What'd you think it would look like?

[00:05:41] **Marci Larson:** I thought I would just do like one farmer's market and then, that would be June through October. And now it's, you know, I wasn't expecting it to be like a year round thing where I do small craft shows and little vendor shows. And now I do two farmers markets and I have stuff in a store.

[00:05:59] It's really blown up way more than I ever could have hoped for.

[00:06:03] **David Crabill:** So when you finally decide to take the plunge and start selling, what was that first? Week like, or month like how did you get your business off the ground?

[00:06:13] **Marci Larson:** I actually did a show in Del Rapids. A woman has, the place is called Willow Meadow Farms and I'll never forget it because she's helped me through everything I've ever dreamed of. She does little summer sessions like a petting zoo that they have and she just lets vendors come in at no fee, nothing.

[00:06:35] And so it really, really blew my business out of the water . I was not expecting anything to come from it. Now it's really expanded.

[00:06:44] **David Crabill:** So do you remember the first day that you sold, you know, did you sell out? What, what was the feeling like that day?

[00:06:53] **Marci Larson:** I sold out of everything I had. I was a nervous wreck because I didn't know, you know, I didn't know what to expect. Like here I am sitting at a couple tables outside in the middle of a field and I completely sold out. It was nothing what I expected it would be.

[00:07:09] **David Crabill:** So it sounds like you got the ball rolling pretty quick now. Was that in the summer of 2019?

[00:07:16] **Marci Larson:** That was in the summer of 2021.

[00:07:21] **David Crabill:** So, it took a little while before you jumped into an event, it sounds like.

[00:07:28] **Marci Larson:** Yep, that was when I first actually started doing markets was that summer.

[00:07:35] **David Crabill:** Did you start your business in 2019? Or is that just, I had that number down, but that might not be true.

[00:07:41] **Marci Larson:** That's when I started selling to family and friends and then on Facebook.

[00:07:46] **David Crabill:** Okay. So, what were the sales like in that first year? Were they pretty sporadic?

[00:07:55] **Marci Larson:** It came and went. There was a pretty big wave for a while and then it kind of died down a little bit. So it came in waves,

[00:08:03] **David Crabill:** I'm just thinking about the pandemic hit at the beginning of 2020. How did that impact your business?

[00:08:10] **Marci Larson:** It died down for a little bit, but I still had a few regular people that would order from me frequently. So it wasn't. What I expected, I kind of expected it to die out, but it worked out. I had a few regular customers that kept me pretty busy. So it was really awesome.

[00:08:28] **David Crabill:** Were those first two years of your business, cause it sounds like your business really started taking off in 2021. Would you say? That those first couple of years were disappointing. Were you ecstatic with the orders you were receiving? Was your business kind of Looking like you had hoped it to be, what were those first couple of years like?

[00:08:53] **Marci Larson:** I wouldn't say disappointed because I honestly didn't know what to expect. I mean, I've gone to farmer's markets for years before I'd wanted to jump in. So, it was just interesting to start from scratch and be like, Hey, I'm gonna do this too. And then, yeah, it just kind of blew up.

[00:09:15] **David Crabill:** And what was your menu looking like in the beginning? Like, what were you actually selling?

[00:09:23] **Marci Larson:** Lots of cookies, cupcakes. I was doing, you know, scotch a roos are really a Midwest staple. I'd sell out of those all the time. And then I do fudge, and then a couple things, you know, like cobblers, and I'll do some pies in the fall.

[00:09:41] **David Crabill:** I'm just curious about your business name. Where does that come from?

[00:09:46] **Marci Larson:** Kahler is my maiden name, since technically I started it way before I met my husband, so, I just thought it was catchy. Kahler's Cakes is a lot better than, like, Larson's Cakes or something. It was kinda hard to tie into Larson's, so I was like, I like Kahler's Cakes a lot better.

[00:10:05] **David Crabill:** With cakes being in your name and I know from what you just said and also seeing your current menu, you do a lot more than cakes. When you started, did you think that you were going to be mostly focused on cakes?

[00:10:20] **Marci Larson:** I kind of wanted to focus on cakes, but I knew that, being in the Midwest, people like comfort food. So, like, Right now, banana bread and banana walnut are the biggest things that I sell. I never expected that. So, Sweetbreads are super popular around here.

[00:10:40] **David Crabill:** Well, Looking back on it, I mean, do you feel like you wish you had chosen a different business name that was a little bit more generic? Or, you think it just doesn't really matter much?

[00:10:53] **Marci Larson:** I think now that it's more of kind of established around the area with the farmers markets I do, I think it doesn't really matter anymore because people see like the cakes name and they're like, okay, so she does cakes and cupcakes and cake pops and those type of things. So I think now it doesn't really matter.

[00:11:14] **David Crabill:** Sweetbreads, banana breads, are, Your best sellers. And you said the Scotch brews are also super popular. Are there other things that people come to you for?

[00:11:25] **Marci Larson:** Yeah, I do really good s'mores and monster cookies. And then people really love cake pops. I do a handful of graduations and seasons, and then I've done dozens of birthday parties over the year that people specifically want cake pops.

[00:11:46] **David Crabill:** When I was looking through your Facebook page, I saw that you have sold a lot of other things beyond just baked goods. You had mentioned you did fudge and some things, but you know, I saw. Sauces and jellies and pickles are those things that you still sell consistently?

[00:12:08] **Marci Larson:** Yeah. I mean, I like canning stuff because I don't like looking at bottles of 50 ingredients. So I decided to start canning stuff. So my pickles might have five or six ingredients, including the cucumber. So I kind of started canning. For my family. And then I don't do anything like a single jar.

[00:12:30] So I do everything in bulk. So I was, like 10 jars of pickles at a time. So my basement is pretty full of jarred stuff and just kind of went from there and I take everything to the farmer's market and it sells pretty well. You know, people around here, they like, you know, farmers and small towns and stuff.

[00:12:47] They like that homemade stuff. So, it helps me keep products rotated.

[00:12:54] **David Crabill:** I wanted to specifically ask you about those items because South Dakota is very unique in that they do allow you to sell. I've seen you sell Alfredo sauces. I mean, They'll let you sell things that most states won't. They'll let you sell perishable baked goods. I know you sell cheesecakes. So, What was required for you to be able to sell some of those items?

[00:13:17] **Marci Larson:** I do have access to a commercial kitchen if I need to. I have no desire to really make everything out of a commercial kitchen, but if I need to, I do have access. And then through the state of South Dakota, there's inspectors that will come through the farmers markets and they tell you like, hey, there's now a food canning class that you can pay and go through to be able to sell the canned stuff.

[00:13:45] So. I did that. It was like a whole day course and then you get a certificate. So I've gone through the channels to be able to sell it. It's a lot of footwork around here to be able to sell what you want to and kind of expand. So

[00:13:58] **David Crabill:** I mean, even though it's a bit of an effort, the alternative would be not being able to sell it at all, which is the case in most states. So you're actually very fortunate. And I think I recall that, you could take the course like you have, or then if you didn't, then you'd have to get every single recipe, like individually approved.

[00:14:18] And then how often do you have to take that course?

[00:14:21] **Marci Larson:** it was just a one time thing, but if they ever update the class, then obviously I'll take it again,

[00:14:28] **David Crabill:** are those items. not big sellers for you, or are some of those items, like the perishable baked goods or the canned goods, are those a pretty significant chunk of your business?

[00:14:40] **Marci Larson:** not really, they're kind of just there to be offered. I do get a handful of orders every now and then, but. Those are just kind of something I offer if somebody's looking for something other than just like plain cupcakes or like plain tomato sauce. It just is something I offer if someone is looking for something specific.

[00:15:03] **David Crabill:** As you have grown your business, have you found yourself, like, paring down your menu, or just focusing on, on certain items?

[00:15:14] **Marci Larson:** I've definitely learned to not make 50 different types of cookies in one week. I've definitely cut that down in half, and I've learned to not overdo you know, I'll make like 50 banana breads, and even though they sell great, I don't want to come home with all this extra stuff, so now I do Maybe three or four separate types of breads and then like two or three different cookies. And then the canned stuff I just do whatever I have time to do that week.

[00:15:43] **David Crabill:** And do you rotate flavors out or are there some things that you bring back to the market every week?

[00:15:50] **Marci Larson:** I do banana and banana walnut every single week and then I usually rotate rhubarb and zucchini and lemon poppy seed and then there's some specialties like I do Apple butter that I can. So in the fall and sometimes throughout the summer, I'll offer that. I do have a bread recipe for apple butter bread that I will make.

[00:16:14] **David Crabill:** I must say it's not too common that I hear of a cottage food business that says that sweet breads are their number one seller. What do you think it is about your banana bread that has caused it to rise to the top?

[00:16:30] **Marci Larson:** Honestly, that is a family recipe, so it might just be the fact that it's been generations that it's been around, but It's just a simple, delicious bread to have any time of day.

[00:16:44] **David Crabill:** What are you pricing your banana bread at?

[00:16:47] **Marci Larson:** So I do a large loaf, which is, it's a brick. I mean, it's a pretty hefty loaf. I do those at \$9 and then I do a small loaf of bread for \$4 and then I just include tax and everything just so it's not. difficult to be like oh 31 cents it's just an even flat cost

[00:17:09] **David Crabill:** So when you say a large loaf, is that like your standard bread loaf pan? I think what, like a set of five by seven and then the small loaf, is that like a mini loaf pan?

[00:17:21] **Marci Larson:** yes

[00:17:22] **David Crabill:** And how are you pricing your items at?



[00:17:26] **Marci Larson:** cookies generally are a four pack for five dollars or i do twelve dollars for a dozen it just kind of varies and then fudge about a pound of fudge i do for five dollars and then cupcakes are thirty dollars a dozen cakes vary it's usually fifteen dollars a layer Then cheesecakes start at \$30. Cake pops are always \$2 a piece no matter what. And then canned stuff. Half pints are \$5 and pints are \$8.

[00:18:03] **David Crabill:** So some of that pricing to me sounds on target, and some of it sounds very surprisingly low to me. Did you say you sell a pound of fudge for \$5?

[00:18:16] **Marci Larson:** It's about a pound. Yes.

[00:18:20] **David Crabill:** That sounds extremely low to me.

[00:18:25] **Marci Larson:** I've been told that, but I mean, it's a hit or miss with fudge around here. I mean, some people, I see it very high price, so I try to keep the fudge prices competitive, because there are, especially around the holidays, there's a ton of craft shows around here, and a lot of people sell fudge, so that way I can kind of push my product a little further.

[00:18:47] **David Crabill:** and you said 30 for a cheesecake. That sounds about right. Sounds like the pricing on your bread is, it's pretty good. I'm sitting at 9 for a large loaf. But the cookies, you said, you know, you're selling those for basically a dollar a cookie, or maybe a little bit more. Are these just your standard little drop cookies?

[00:19:11] Are they, I felt like you mentioned you make big cookies,

[00:19:15] **Marci Larson:** Yeah, they're a decent size. It's probably about a cookie and a half, but around here, you know, there's so many bakeries that brick and mortar buildings that are opening around here and closing and food trucks, and I feel like everyone sells cookies.

[00:19:31] **David Crabill:** so you would say your, pricing's pretty on target with what others are selling their items for in your area.

[00:19:39] **Marci Larson:** Yep,

[00:19:41] **David Crabill:** Well, The main thing is you obviously want to make sure you're making money at the end of the day. Cookies are a lot of work. And

you've ran the numbers you know, how much the ingredient costs are, percentage wise when you sell your cookies

[00:19:57] **Marci Larson:** everything is down to science, to how much each cookie and each loaf of bread costs to make. So it's, you know, with inflation and everything that's going on, I have everything. I adjust it as needed.

[00:20:11] **David Crabill:** what are you doing for packaging

[00:20:14] **Marci Larson:** I do these basic clamshells for almost everything, and then breads I just do cellophane.

[00:20:22] **David Crabill:** And where do you get your, um, plastic clamshell packaging from?

[00:20:27] **Marci Larson:** I do it from Amazon.

[00:20:31] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like the packaging doesn't make much of a difference in your area for the types of customers that are buying from you?

[00:20:40] **Marci Larson:** Not really. I mean, I have pretty stickers, and the labeling on there is pretty basic. A lot of people like to eat with their eyes, so if something looks good, they would rather have seen the product before they buy it, before, like, getting some fancy box.

[00:21:01] **David Crabill:** So you mentioned you did direct sales to mostly family and friends for the first couple years, and then your business started to take off when you did this. Event, right? So can you just take me through the trajectory of your business from that point onward? Like that event, you said it went super well.

[00:21:22] Did you just start to jump full force into events as much as you could? What were the next few months of your business like?

[00:21:30] **Marci Larson:** Immediately after that event, I was like, I signed up for a farmer's market that's here locally in Sioux Falls on Thursday afternoons, and then signed up for one on Saturdays that's in Brandon, Sioux Falls. I mean, after that first event, I got everything I need to go forward.

[00:21:50] So I jumped headfirst and it's just been. Great ever since, you know, it's been a lot of trial and error deciding what I want to sell and how busy I want

to be was another big thing, so it's been a lot of trial and tribulations figuring out how to fit that into schedule and family time and Everything like that.

[00:22:11] **David Crabill:** Now you said you sold out at the first event that you did. Have you had some items that just didn't sell well?

[00:22:21] **Marci Larson:** I might come home with a few canned stuff, but I've really Cut back.

[00:22:26] **David Crabill:** But you don't feel like there's been an item that flopped or just didn't really sell

[00:22:35] **Marci Larson:** Kind of the cookies. I really have been going through my list and I do, two or three cookies a week that I'll bring with me and it just depends on what, you know, I'll try a cookie flavor, I'll switch them out every couple weeks just to see what sells and if I don't sell any during those couple weeks then I'll just hold it back for a while and bring it back later.

[00:22:58] **David Crabill:** Are you offering samples for your products at these markets or events?

[00:23:04] **Marci Larson:** No, but once in a while I will for the smaller craft shows during the off season. I'll like open a jar of apple butter and offer it with a graham cracker, or when I'm trying to push the salsa towards the end of the season I'll open that and offer it, but usually not. I mean, The sweetbreads and the cookies kind of sell themselves.

[00:23:31] **David Crabill:** Now are you dealing with mostly returning customers, or do you often have a lot of new customers? At each market.

[00:23:42] **Marci Larson:** Kind of both. A lot of them are returning customers, but a lot of people really like to, you know, go out on a Thursday evening or Saturday morning to look at the farmer's market, so it's kind of split down the middle. I do have quite a few returning customers. You know, there's just as many new faces as many as I see returning customers every week.

[00:24:06] **David Crabill:** So you jumped full force into the events in 2021, I think you said, and so where did your business go from there?

[00:24:17] **Marci Larson:** I did two markets a week and then I started signing up for about as many craft shows as I could during the off seasons, November through April. So it was very busy.

[00:24:32] **David Crabill:** And is that just what you've been doing since then for the past couple of years?

[00:24:38] **Marci Larson:** Yes, I do work mostly full time because it's during the off season, it's pretty dead other than Christmas. But this year, Valentine's Day and Easter, we're super busy, surprisingly. But I do work full time, but they give me time off when I need to, so it's Becoming where it's getting very busy, but I'm just not ready to make that plunge into doing the baking stuff full time because it's just not quite there yet to be sustainable for an income for me yet.

[00:25:14] **David Crabill:** And what's your day job?

[00:25:18] **Marci Larson:** I am actually a cook at a daycare , so it's full time cooking and baking for me.

[00:25:23] **David Crabill:** So have you always had a background in food service?

[00:25:28] **Marci Larson:** Yes, I've always either done a cook for daycare or childcare and then I've always, you know, I've done a lot of food business as well.

[00:25:40] **David Crabill:** And you said that you have a commercial kitchen available to you. Is that the commercial kitchen that you use at the daycare?

[00:25:47] **Marci Larson:** Yes, that's all certified and they let me use it as needed.

[00:25:52] **David Crabill:** How much do you run out of your home versus out of the commercial kitchen?

[00:25:59] **Marci Larson:** Like 95%, the only time I use the commercial kitchen is if I have, like a cheesecake or something.

[00:26:07] **David Crabill:** But you could do that from home, right? Under South Dakota's law.

[00:26:14] **Marci Larson:** I could, it's just better safe than sorry with kids running around and everything. I would just rather be safe than sorry than to do it out of a commercial kitchen.

[00:26:26] **David Crabill:** Is that your goal to get to the point where you can leave the cook job and move into this full time?

[00:26:34] **Marci Larson:** That's where it gets tricky because I really do love my job. If it came to that point, it's just kind of a hard decision, but I feel like I would be able to quit if it got that busy to where I would have to take more time off than what I do in the summer when I have shows towards the end of the year.

[00:26:56] **David Crabill:** So how do you manage that all? Cause you, you're working a full-time job and I know you said that they do allow you to take some time off if needed, it does sound like a lot, like you're doing multiple events a week, you're trying to manage the job, and then I know you have kids too. So how do you make that all work?

[00:27:18] **Marci Larson:** Well, My husband definitely says that I am, I enjoy punishing myself in that aspect, and I think he's right. I just figured it out. I mean, I spend time with my kids and if I have to, bake bread or mix cookies after they go to bed, then I do give them my full attention at home if I don't have anything going on.

[00:27:39] So it's easy for me to be at that high paced energy where I'm always needed somewhere.

[00:27:47] **David Crabill:** Would you say that you don't get a lot of sleep at night?

[00:27:53] **Marci Larson:** It comes and goes in waves. I've always been sort of a night owl, but yeah, I definitely punish myself sometimes in that aspect.

[00:28:03] **David Crabill:** I see that you now do wholesale as well. How did that opportunity come about?

[00:28:09] **Marci Larson:** I saw this little boutique that they have, about 40 vendors in the store, so I filled out an application and then they reached out to me. And now I've been in there ever since.

[00:28:25] **David Crabill:** And you filled out the application and how did it work? Did they give you a shelf to fill up, or did they, you know, specifically want certain items in their store?

[00:28:38] **Marci Larson:** No, they just kind of let each vendor go about how they see fit as long as it works with the store. So I had to buy a little shelving unit that I use and then they want a pretty big variety of things. So I was one of the bakers that just eased my way in there. And now, they have a waiting list for a lot of vendors.

[00:28:58] So if something happens where I wasn't able to be in there anymore, they just, you know, find another baker, but generally in that store, I'm the only baker that actually does the sweetbreads and the cookies. There's a couple people that do like gluten free dry mixes and some jellies and stuff, but I'm the only baker that actually does the sweetbreads and the cookies and the fudge in the store.

[00:29:21] **David Crabill:** And you said that this is a boutique store, so it sounds like it's a kind of a unique retail store location. Like, almost everything they sell is from a small business.

[00:29:33] **Marci Larson:** Yes, they have about 40 different vendors from the area and all over. So everyone is a homemaker. So everybody, you know, there's wood burning, there's boutique clothes in there. People knit, people sew, people make key chains. It's a lot of, I mean, there's jewelry, there's everything you could think of under one roof and it's all made by about 40 different makers.

[00:30:00] And

[00:30:01] **David Crabill:** how have your products sold there, in terms of what has sold well compared to the markets? Have you found that things sell differently in the store?

[00:30:11] **Marci Larson:** The jars definitely move a little slower. Jelly is super popular there, but the breads definitely sell out and the scotch a roos I sell out. Almost every week, depending on the summer, we're hitting the slower months, so I'll cut back on that stuff. But usually I do really well.

[00:30:34] **David Crabill:** And how often are you restocking?

[00:30:37] **Marci Larson:** I restock Tuesdays and Fridays, so I keep the stand pretty while stocked.

[00:30:45] **David Crabill:** And you're two events per week on top of that?

[00:30:50] **Marci Larson:** I've cut down to the one in Brandon, so next week I'll start the Thursday market and then Brandon, I do once or twice a month.

[00:31:01] **David Crabill:** And in terms of the store, like how, it sounds like a unique store. Is it a typical wholesale model where they sell everything for you and just pay you for what you stock, or is it that you only get paid for what sells? Like how does it work?

[00:31:19] **Marci Larson:** Yeah, they've recently just switched me over to commission because I used to pay a rental fee like everybody else so now they just take a commission percent out and then they just write me a check every couple weeks

[00:31:33] **David Crabill:** That is interesting that most people don't know rent a space. So, what did that cost at the beginning to rent a section of their shop?

[00:31:44] **Marci Larson:** I have the smallest space in the store that I know of so the minimum was \$50 a month And then, they go by square feet, so the bigger the booth that you need, the more you pay a month. I was paying \$50 a month, and then they decided, since I was a baker, they cut me down to commission.

[00:32:08] **David Crabill:** And with \$50 a month, were you getting all the proceeds from sales?

[00:32:16] **Marci Larson:** Yeah.

[00:32:18] **David Crabill:** Are you now effectively paying more because you're commission based?

[00:32:25] **Marci Larson:** I feel like my prices are low enough to where kind of, but I still do really well.

[00:32:35] **David Crabill:** Well, I mean, It sounds like a pretty good opportunity and a good space. And I mean, Is this a new store, or have a lot of food vendors come and gone and not been able to do as well as you have?

[00:32:50] **Marci Larson:** Besides me, there was one other baker, but she actually does, like, wedding cakes and stuff. So she's just, she was way too busy. So she actually had to take her stuff out. So now I am the only baker there.

[00:33:07] **David Crabill:** Well, I'm just curious, I recall you saying that there's bakers all around you, selling all sorts of stuff. Why do you feel like they don't have more? Is it just because, since you're in there now, they don't want competing products?

[00:33:23] **Marci Larson:** I think so. They really try to keep only one type of vendor in there at a time. They would probably have another baker. There's a couple of sourdough people in there right now, but it just depends on what works for the businesses, too. So they really, the store really keeps one vendor of one thing at a time.

[00:33:48] **David Crabill:** Now that you're doing this wholesale thing, do you feel like you'd like to do more of that and focus more on finding other wholesale opportunities? Or do you feel like you're pretty good with just the one?

[00:34:03] **Marci Larson:** I feel like I might try to find another wholesale place, but for now I'm good. My busy season is just kicking off for the next six months or so, so I'm definitely good. I might try to find something to do during the winter, but for now it's definitely fine just doing what I'm doing.

[00:34:24] **David Crabill:** So it sounds like you enjoy going out to the markets. It's not like you would want to move to a complete wholesale model.

[00:34:33] **Marci Larson:** No, I definitely love being able to be there and be like, hey, this is, You know, I appreciate you coming out to see me and seeing the face of the business and I like talking to people and socializing with them and I definitely like that aspect a little more than doing the sale thing.

[00:34:54] **David Crabill:** So do you feel like the wholesale thing, you've just pursued that to increase consistency of sales or volume?

[00:35:01] **Marci Larson:** Yes. That way I can keep some sort of sales going at a consistent rate throughout the year.

[00:35:09] **David Crabill:** So, it sounds like you've found a pretty good balance between the two.

[00:35:14] **Marci Larson:** Yeah.

[00:35:16] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like these events and this wholesale market have sort of been how you've marketed yourself or have you tried other things to get the word out about your business?



[00:35:29] **Marci Larson:** It helps. I definitely overdo stuff on Facebook, I feel like, but it does help.

[00:35:39] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I did want to talk to you about social media because I see you post a lot on social media.

[00:35:45] **Marci Larson:** I have to, I gotta, I got like 500 something followers now, I gotta let them know that I did 20 jars of jelly.

[00:35:54] **David Crabill:** Were you active on social media before starting the business? Like, do you just like being active on Facebook in general?

[00:36:03] **Marci Larson:** Not really. Honestly, I do more on the business page than anything. My personal page is pretty quiet for the most part.

[00:36:14] **David Crabill:** Well, I can definitely see that your Facebook page is active. I also notice you cross post over to Instagram, and I've seen this before, but, I just was really surprised to see that you now have had, I think it was like 300 posts on Instagram, probably those were cross posted, I assume, but very few followers, just a few dozen followers on Instagram. I just was wondering if, if you feel like you know why that is or why you haven't gotten a lot of traction on Instagram.

[00:36:50] **Marci Larson:** Around here, not a lot of people use Instagram. Now it's really more of Facebook and TikTok, which I have no intentions of downloading another app to actually do anything with, but Instagram, that was more of a personal page and now it's really kind of on the, I mean, I've had that Instagram for, I don't know, but yeah, Instagram's kind of dead.

[00:37:15] Just a handful of friends and a couple customers, but Facebook is really where it is focused.

[00:37:22] **David Crabill:** Yeah. Well, It's a very clear indication to me which platform works the best is highly dependent on your area because don't think I've ever seen somebody with over a thousand posts on Instagram, that, you know, just clearly people in your area aren't using it or aren't engaging with it.

[00:37:42] You but I assume you don't really care since you've got the engagement on Facebook.

[00:37:48] **Marci Larson:** Nope, I'll still keep posting on Instagram just to kind of see what I can draw in. But yeah, nothing really from the Instagram side.

[00:37:59] **David Crabill:** Now, do you feel like most of the people on Facebook are people who are your customers or do you feel like you're getting new customers coming in through Facebook?

[00:38:10] **Marci Larson:** It definitely brings in more followers through the market season because they will tag all the businesses that are going to be there week to week. So it definitely brings in, you know, a few followers every now and then. So, it definitely helps having everybody, you know, If I'm doing a market, I'm going to be sharing posts or liking and commenting and stuff to kind of bring up foot traffic.

[00:38:38] So we're kind of all in this together around here, you know, people share each other's posts and we'll comment on each other's stuff. So it's all a very, pretty tight knit community around here.

[00:38:50] **David Crabill:** Now, I'm just looking at how much you post on Facebook. Sometimes, it's many times in a single day, How do you come up with all of the content that you're going to post and how do you keep up with it all?

[00:39:05] **Marci Larson:** If I'm doing a market, I definitely will post pictures as I'm baking stuff just so people see like, Hey, there's rhubarb bread this week, or Hey, there's peach cobbler this week, or there's fresh jelly. And then a lot of them are sharing, you know, the story. Stores posts and the farmer's market posts so people know kind of where I'm at and like what days I'll be there. So that's a lot. That kind of brings in foot traffic too.

[00:39:36] **David Crabill:** Now, you had said that you have tried just about every pop up that you can. Have you found that certain types of events or certain markets don't do as well, or there are certain customers that aren't as attracted to your products?

[00:39:54] **Marci Larson:** There's a couple, I've kind of really narrowed it down. I feel like this year that'll be the ones that'll bring the most customers that will like my stuff specifically. So there's been a handful that I've done over since I've started that I've done every year. So those help bring in a lot of recurring customers and then I'll try a couple new ones throughout the season and if it doesn't work then I just kind of move on.

[00:40:27] **David Crabill:** And as you think back over the past few years of running this business, are there any moments or memories that stand out to you?

[00:40:35] **Marci Larson:** Just kind of that first summer that I started all this, it, you know, actual markets, it really just blew me away, and I've been a customer of farmer's markets, but being on the other side, you know, you really have to put yourself out there and show people like, Hey, this is what I'm doing every week. So it's really interesting to see the journey and see all the returning people. It's awesome the foot traffic I've brought in for myself.

[00:41:06] **David Crabill:** You know, A lot of people try starting businesses like this and struggle and, eventually maybe shut down or they just, they don't see the kind of engagement that you've seen with your business. What do you think has been the difference for you? Why do you think it took off really quickly and people have consistently come back and you've done quite well?

[00:41:31] **Marci Larson:** I have a lot of family recipes and I know, you know, this is something that I have my kids watch me do like, hey, this is what I'm doing for myself. You know, you don't necessarily have to do a job that's inside the box. You can really do kind of whatever you want. So it really helps me put myself out there more so that I can set a good example for my kids.

[00:41:58] **David Crabill:** What do you think is something that you've done over the course of your business that's had the biggest impact on making it successful?

[00:42:08] **Marci Larson:** I don't know, I guess just putting myself out there and being at markets and meeting people face to face just kind of, Helps people see, you know, it's not some big corporation. I'm out here doing this by myself every day, every week. It's all me.

[00:42:26] **David Crabill:** If you could go back a few years, knowing what you know now, Is there any advice that you would give to yourself when you're getting the business off the ground?

[00:42:37] **Marci Larson:** Maybe just start sooner. I mean, Everything's worked out to where I am now, but you know, if I would have started a couple years sooner, who knows where it would have been now.

[00:42:50] **David Crabill:** And for somebody who is thinking about starting today, who can't start sooner, is there any advice you would give them? You know, Somebody who is, uh, budding cottage food entrepreneur, thinking about starting a business like yours?

[00:43:05] **Marci Larson:** Just be yourself. If you're kind to people and personable, really strike up conversations and really put yourself out there to show people what you can do and just what you're made of.

[00:43:19] **David Crabill:** Obviously your business has grown quite a lot over the last few years, and it's very successful. As you look forward, where would you like to take the business?

[00:43:30] **Marci Larson:** I would like to do a couple more wholesales. If it came to a point where I would have to do this full-time, then we'll figure it out as we get there. I would, I don't really have any notions of going into my own brick and mortar. There's a lot of bakeries around here and. You know, A lot of thriving and a lot of failures, but I kind of started this so that I could be at home to do it and make a sustainable income so that I could be home with my kids, even though I'm in the kitchen all the time.

[00:44:02] So I really would like to keep it at that, but I would just like to be able to quit my job and do this full time.

[00:44:09] **David Crabill:** So what do you feel keeps you going with the business? Because any business takes a lot of time and effort and isn't easy. Why do you feel like you love running your business so much?

[00:44:22] **Marci Larson:** I just like talking to people and sit, you know, I still get put on cloud nine when people come by and they'll buy, you know, \$30 worth of sweetbreads. It's still an amazing feeling to know that people are coming to my stand to buy things that I've put a lot of time and effort into. It's a constant, kind of tweaking things to get them where I feel they need to be, you know, packaging or labeling or.

[00:44:53] Advertising, like it's, come a long way and I'm constantly tweaking things and yeah, it's getting to where I need to be.

[00:45:00] **David Crabill:** Well, thank you so much for sharing your story with us. Now, if people would like to learn more about you, where can they find you or how can they reach out?

[00:45:12] **Marci Larson:** Facebook, so it's Kahler's Cakes, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, because I've gotten a lot of people all over the country looking at where I'm at, but just the Facebook page.

[00:45:23] **David Crabill:** Perfect. Well, I'll include a link to that in the show notes. And thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today.

[00:45:32] **Marci Larson:** Thank you so much for having me.

[00:45:37] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager Podcast. For more information about this episode, go to [forrager.com/podcast/118](https://forrager.com/podcast/118). 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.

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