

Ka'Terra Dettbarn with Sweet Addiction

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 Ka'Terra Dettbarn. But real quick, I wanted to check, have you created a website for your business yet? And if you have, do you pay for it?

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

[00:00:37] 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. All right, so I have Ka'Terra on the show today.

[00:01:01] She lives in Ocean Pines, Maryland and sells cupcakes, cakes, cookies, and other baked goods with her cottage food business, Sweet Addiction. Ka'Terra started the bakery with her sister back in 2018, and initially they thought they would focus on custom orders of gourmet cupcakes. But their business had other plans for them, and they had to adapt through a lot of trial and error to find a business model that worked well.

[00:01:28] After a few years, they started selling at a variety of events. And their business has really taken off since then. In this episode, Ka'Terra shares how persistence, determination, and listening for guidance ultimately led them on the right path to success. And with that, let's jump right into this episode. Welcome to the show, Ka'Terra. Nice to have you here.

[00:01:56] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Thank you for having me.

[00:01:56] **David Crabill:** Well, Ka'Terra, can you take me back to the beginning of your journey? How did it all get started?

[00:02:02] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I was in the military from 2003 to 2007. I was discharged at that time, honorably, and moved to Indiana with a previous significant other. And it didn't work out too well. And I didn't have a job to fall back on after being discharged, it was kind of hard and depressing. And, baking was my way to deal with things.

[00:02:24] It was my therapy. I would just get in the kitchen and just bake. And unfortunately I would eat it too at the time until I had people to give it to. I was able to share with some friends that I met in the area and I joined a local church. And they would all tell me that I needed to sell. And at some point during that time, they gave me an opportunity to sell at the church.

[00:02:45] So I made a ton of things just because I wanted to put myself out there and I'm like, Oh, can I really do it? And so I made a lot of stuff and I actually sold out at that one particular event. It was pretty fun. Fast forward to now I'm baking with my sister. Now, I moved back to Maryland. In 2009, and I still didn't have a job then, so I was trying to find things to do. So I would bake a little bit here, sell maybe one or two cakes, was probably maybe once or twice a month that I did that. But then when I started working, I, um, took a break. However, Chakirah, She was a little involved in baking just a little bit.

[00:03:24] She wanted to do more like funnel cakes and doughnuts and stuff like that, that she did for fun. And, it went pretty well for her. And then she took a break. you know, Life happens, we take a break and she started working a lot more. And they had a customer appreciation party for work and she decided to make funnel cake cupcakes and they were a huge hit, so she called me and told me how excited she was and How everyone at work was telling her that she needed to start selling them. And when a complete stranger gave her a review that was it week. That's when Sweet Addiction was born.

[00:04:02] **David Crabill:** So, a little timeline here. When did you sell at the church and then when did Chakirah eventually get super excited about these funnel cupcakes to the point where you started your business?

[00:04:17] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I was selling at the church between it was about 2008 It was in Gary Indiana

[00:04:25] **David Crabill:** okay. So this is quite a long time before you started the cottage food business. And I know that Chakirah is pretty involved. Unfortunately, she couldn't join us today. I know you're now more involved in the business, but it sounds like she actually is. Okay.

[00:04:40] kind of

[00:04:40] got the ball rolling on this business.

[00:04:43] Like what, was she the person who encouraged you and her to start it?

[00:04:49] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes, she was. So if it hadn't been for her selling these cupcakes at work and getting all excited about it. Do you think you would have started the business?

[00:05:07] Big break from baking and I was just doing it just for fun and different family functions. And, I wasn't looking to sell anymore.

[00:05:14] **David Crabill:** Yeah. And you'd mentioned that you baked kind of as a way to deal with stress and deal with the problems that life throws at you.

[00:05:23] Was that still the case 10 years later, or was that more after you're discharged from the Navy?

[00:05:29] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** That's still the case now. I can have a rough day at work and I'll come home and whip up something in the kitchen. I enjoy it so much. And that's usually the time where my family just sits back and they just let go of doing whatever in the kitchen and they enjoy the benefits of it.

[00:05:47] **David Crabill:** Well, clearly you're both pretty experienced bakers by the time you decide to start selling. So, what do you feel like the business has added to your life? Because as you said, you probably would have just kept doing it for friends and family. I appreciate meeting new people. I get to see different people every week at different events and actually being able to engage with them versus engaging on social media. So I like that face to face interaction. And I used to be an introvert, but now I love talking to people. Do you feel like it's the business itself that caused you to change, to be a little bit more extroverted?

[00:06:27] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I think so. And I was in direct sales for a point. I used to sell jewelry and that also got me out there to talk to people. My mentor from the jewelry business would always encourage us to talk to people and she inspired us often, like weekly on calls and at conferences and things like that.

[00:06:46] So I took some tips from her and from that business as well

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[00:06:50] **David Crabill:** Yeah, a sales job would definitely do it too. Now, it's not typical for an introvert to seek a sales job. How did you land in that role?

[00:06:58] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I was looking for a way to earn money because I didn't have a stable job at the time. So I was trying to figure out what to do. And I like fashion. I saw a catalog with jewelry. That came in the mail, but they didn't do it wholesale. So I was just seeking it.

[00:07:15] And then one of my cousins showed me this other catalog with jewelry in it, and I loved it. The jewelry was amazing. So I just jumped right into it headfirst. I was like, if I love the jewelry, I know I can sell it because other people will love it as well. So I was like, I'll wear it and you sell it.

[00:07:29] And I did that for about 10 years.

[00:07:32] **David Crabill:** So what do you feel like you learned from your sales job that you have taken into this business?

[00:07:38] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I learned how to be persistent. I learned how to be confident and to trust the process. So that's what I took into my baking business is to be confident. I'm confident with my pricing, confident when I'm talking to customers or when I'm doing a business pitch or anything like that. staying tall and convincing myself like I can do this I just constantly motivate myself and I continue to learn and stay coachable.

[00:08:04] like, I listened to your podcast, I listen to several podcasts so I can learn new things. I'm constantly learning I

[00:08:11] **David Crabill:** Know that Chakirah is the one that kind of kickstarted the business. Do you feel like you jumped right into the idea of running this as a business? Or did you approach it a little bit more tentatively?

[00:08:25] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I jumped right in. I think I jumped in the deep end. Do you typically jump in just with everything? Is that just part of your personality?

[00:08:36] is, yes. I strive to give 110% in everything that I do.

[00:08:42] **David Crabill:** What was the timing when you actually jumped? Into the deep end and started this business.

[00:08:48] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** It started in 2018. We started selling at home. We just sold a couple items. We started as a fundraiser for my mom's daycare and somebody tried the cupcakes and they were, they wanted to order. So she ordered for her husband's birthday party and the first order was 150 cupcakes. I was like, Oh, wow.

[00:09:09] And it just cycled from there. And she still purchases every year to this day, often.

[00:09:15] **David Crabill:** Well, That's a very large order as your first order.

[00:09:19] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Oh, yeah.

[00:09:20] **David Crabill:** So was that the focus initially? I know you said Chakirah had made these funnel cake cupcakes, were you just focused on cupcakes in the beginning?

[00:09:29] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes, we wanted to do all the gourmet flavors cause we didn't want just plain cupcakes. We wanted everything gourmet, everything. So funnel cake cupcakes were a huge hit and we did, Oreo ones, peach cobbler, all kinds of flavors.

[00:09:44] **David Crabill:** When would you say the business really started to ramp up or take off?

[00:09:50] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** in 2021, it started to take off. We received more orders during the week, like personal orders, with cakes and cupcakes around that time. And in 2022. One of my customers called me and said she had an event for me to do if I was interested. She was like, are you ready? Do you think you can handle it?

[00:10:11] And I was like I'd rather be prepared for an opportunity and not have one and then have an opportunity and not be prepared for one. So I was like, but I'm ready. Cause I've already started getting stuff. I was like, I'm definitely ready for it. And it was a huge event. And it was about 2,000, 2,000 people. And we sold out for that one. And she invited me to two more events this summer. And we did really well there too. I would say they're probably 1K days. So we sold probably over a thousand dollars in goods at each of these events. And ever since she's invited me out to the first event, I've gotten emails about being invited to multitudes of events and it's been amazing.

[00:10:47] **David Crabill:** Yeah, so you're saying, you know, 2022 and 2021 is when it started to take a turn. You had said that you started in 2018 though, so there's a few years in there. before it really started to take off. So what did those first few years of your business look like?

[00:11:06] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Trial and error. We would come up with different ideas it was a lot of practicing in the kitchen and giving away product, and just networking

[00:11:16] **David Crabill:** Who were you giving away products to?

[00:11:20] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** to schools. Different coworkers. I took some to a recreation center. I did it to my neighbors. It was just random.

[00:11:32] **David Crabill:** Yeah.

[00:11:32] Do you feel like those are converted into orders?

[00:11:35] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Some of them did, not all of them. So you say trial and error. Take me into that. Like, was it frustrating?

[00:11:45] **David Crabill:** What were you trying? What was working? What wasn't working?

[00:11:48] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** We would try different recipes and try to get them down pat in different strategies, such as some people wanted to order four or five flavors with just a dozen cupcakes and I tried it. It didn't work out for us. So now I have a minimum. So now you have to order a dozen per flavor, because trying to turn the batter, one initial batter, into four or five different flavors is not going to work.

[00:12:14] It's not feasible. We tried it multiple times and it just didn't work out. So we did it that way. tried different cookie recipes. And different systems, just to see what we could do and succeed at,

[00:12:27] **David Crabill:** So you were venturing beyond cupcakes at a certain point.

[00:12:31] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes.

[00:12:32] **David Crabill:** I know the pandemic is here too in this period of time. How do you feel like that affected your business?

[00:12:40] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** At first we completely shut down because we didn't know what to expect and figured, you know, no, one's going to want desserts, but that proved us that we were wrong about that. slowly, baked at home and did like curbside pickup on a Saturday. So we would set the menu out and have everybody do their pre orders and have their orders ready by Thursday.

[00:13:02] So that way, Thursday night into Friday and a little Saturday morning, we set a pickup time and they would, just pull up and we would hand them the cupcakes through the window and everybody had a different appointment time to show up so that we wouldn't have to worry about social distancing or anything like that. During that period of time, I also learned about the cottage food rules. So I had to revamp recipes during that time too. I forgot to mention that because we were just under the table at the time. We didn't know about cottage food guidelines, but now that we know, we can do better.

[00:13:33] So we just changed a lot of the recipes so that we can be in compliance.

[00:13:37] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I know you sent me an email at one point saying that your hardest challenge was, you know, adapting recipes to be compliant with the cottage food law. So what were you selling prior to this that fell outside of the realm of what Maryland allows?

[00:13:56] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I sold the sweet potato cupcakes, we had banana pudding, we had the strawberry pretzel salad, we were using cream cheeses, I had this whipped cream cheese icing just to die for now I can just use that for my family. But when we get a commercial kitchen, I'm bringing it back, because everyone loved it.

[00:14:18] **David Crabill:** And during that time, did anybody comment and say, Oh, you're not supposed to sell this stuff or do people just not care or not know?

[00:14:31] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I think a lot of people don't know. I think it's definitely a lack of knowledge. And yeah, no one actually said anything about it. I was just researching and stumbled upon it. I was like, Oh, I didn't know I could do this.

[00:14:43] **David Crabill:** When you dropped those items, did you have disappointed customers?

[00:14:48] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** No, I actually didn't. I did not. And the frosting that we use now, the buttercream, they absolutely love it. like, it's not a difference. Well as long as I can keep the flavors the same without using those harmful ingredients. They love it.

[00:15:03] **David Crabill:** Before the pandemic, and before your business really started to take off, were you feeling frustrated? I mean, it sounds like you tried a lot of different things, a lot of different recipes. You said you gave away a lot of stuff and weren't seeing the return on the investment. What was the feeling at that time like?

[00:15:24] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I Just thought it was going to just be a part time thing and every once in a while I'll bake something. But I didn't really let it get me down because I'm naturally resilient. So I always look for a way to overcome it. I guess I was just born with that, that resiliency. I just look for another way to adapt and overcome.

[00:15:45] **David Crabill:** Was there a time in those early days when you tried something and you felt like it did work really well?

[00:15:52] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** The multiple flavors and the dozen cupcakes, that was the thing. Because I saw other people doing it, but I just couldn't, I couldn't do it.

[00:16:02] **David Crabill:** What was your pricing like in the beginning?

[00:16:05] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** In the beginning, we were doing, probably 20 a dozen for cupcakes. Now they start at 35 dollars a dozen. Yeah, so that's less

[00:16:16] **David Crabill:** then 2 cupcakes that you started. And didn't you say these were gourmet cupcakes, like they weren't just regular cupcakes?

[00:16:22] So

[00:16:23] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** they were gourmet cupcakes for \$20 a dozen, and they were over the top.

[00:16:29] **David Crabill:** And yet you said you weren't finding a ton of success, right? So, it couldn't have been a pricing issue. What do you think held people back from buying?

[00:16:40] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** It wasn't convenient to get cupcakes from us either because we work full-time. So it was pretty much the only time people had to order or be able to pick up was on a Saturday or a Sunday because during the week we couldn't take on any orders. So it could have been a timing issue. And then also during that time, a lot of people in our area have started baking as well.

[00:17:02] So it was another popular type of thing. I wasn't always such a popular person. So they would go to someone else first. And the other pricing too, their prices were lower than mine. I don't think I saw one person whose prices were 18 a dozen. For gourmet food. I

[00:17:18] **David Crabill:** So I would say you had pretty low pricing in the beginning. Sso looking back now, knowing what you know, is there anything you would have changed in that first year or two and done differently?

[00:17:33] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I think I would have done my research on the laws first, so I wouldn't have to worry about making that shift. But then, I think that's a big lesson, where like, mindset changed, because I was depressed about the cottage food thing and didn't think I was gonna be able to continue. However, I had a shift in my mindset.

[00:17:52] It was like, you can do it. And I adapted to it and we're growing rapidly.

[00:17:57] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like you've used mindset i n other areas of your business that have helped propel it forward,

[00:18:06] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes. I think about shifting my mindset a lot. So before preparing for an event, I have to focus and set my goals. For that particular event I have a different set of goals for each one. And then I have a set of goals for the year. I have a set of goals for the end of the week, I'm a big mindset person. Like how am I thinking? And I think positive and with my husband because he helps a lot. And my sister and her boyfriend, I have to like, make sure everybody's positive. We could be going into an event where they think we're not going to do so well.

[00:18:37] And if they say it, I'm like, nope. We're always going to think positive. What can we do to make it better? What can we do to make the event great for us? And for the vendors around us. I don't, like the negative mindset.

[00:18:46] **David Crabill:** Well, clearly it's working since you said you've had a number of 1k days, and I could see from your social feeds that you've done a lot of events, and you said that events are just coming to you now, right?

[00:19:00] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes. I just thank God because I don't have to search for them. They're emailing me and inviting us. to their events.

[00:19:07] **David Crabill:** And how are they hearing about you?

[00:19:10] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** From other events that we're at, they come and see us. Sometimes, they will stop and talk to us. Like at our last event, well, a couple events ago, Eleni stopped us, came to the booth and she talked to us about her business and wanted us to come and set up every once in a while. She's going to do a pop up shop there during the summer.

[00:19:29] So I was like, okay, we can do that.

[00:19:32] **David Crabill:** Is that mostly what your business is doing right now? It's just events?

[00:19:38] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes. I didn't think it would go this way. I thought it would be more weddings and birthday parties, but it's been a lot of vending events. So I think that's the route we're going to go.

[00:19:45] **David Crabill:** Now are these food events? Are they conferences? What kind of events do you typically do well at?

[00:19:52] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Different fairs, like we have the County Fair. They have a couple of beer festivals here. I'm going to be at the Farmer's Market now, starting in two weeks. We were just recently at a strawberry festival. There was an Easter fair and one of the exciting things was, it was a really big event, it was anime and that was really cool.

[00:20:13] **David Crabill:** So, you said that you're about to start the farmer's market. Have you done that before?

[00:20:19] Have you done regular events in the past?

[00:20:22] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I have not done a farmer's market. I did an event in that, in the same area. We've done smaller events in the same area where the farmer's market is, but I haven't actually done the farmer's market yet.

[00:20:33] **David Crabill:** So this is going to be your first time doing something like a weekly market.

[00:20:37] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes,

[00:20:39] **David Crabill:** So it's interesting that you've found a lot of success just doing these sporadic events, right? Cause you're not dealing with a recurring customer base, I would assume, right?

[00:20:51] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** right.

[00:20:53] **David Crabill:** So you're having to convince everyone at the market or at the event to buy from you.

[00:20:59] So, what do you feel has worked well in order to convert those sales since you're basically dealing with people who don't know you?

[00:21:07] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I would say branding and showing up because we're showing up and they see our sign, they see our banner, they see the colors. And I hear some people during the events, they will say, Oh, I've seen you before. Oh, you were just at this event, or you were at this event. And a lady a couple of weeks ago was like, Oh, you were at the 4th of July event a year ago, and I ordered this and it was so delicious.

[00:21:31] I was like, Oh, great. She remembers what she got a year ago. And the repeated events, they would say, Oh, you're back, you know, and I just enjoy hearing those compliments. Excited that they actually come and look for us. So I've been sharing our location. I've been trying to do better and share it ahead of time and multiple times of where we're going to be so that we can get some repeat customers out there. And a lot of word of mouth is great too.

[00:21:54] **David Crabill:** So, I know you started this business focusing on cupcakes. What does your business look like today? Like when you set up an event, what's your menu looking like?

[00:22:05] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** So now when we set up events, we will have maybe two cupcakes. I would do two or three cake cups and maybe four or five different cookie flavors and maybe some cake slices to go along. And I found

that the cake cups and cookies sell a lot faster than my cupcakes. specialize in cupcakes, but they're usually the last to go.

[00:22:25] **David Crabill:** Well, It's interesting cause, you know, cupcakes used to be a huge fad like 10 years ago. So that might just be the sole reason why customers aren't looking for cupcakes as much anymore.

[00:22:39] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Right. So yeah, they like the cake cups, which is still essentially a cupcake, but it's in a cup so it's convenient. So you can hold it and walk around and still enjoy the festivals and farmer's markets or wherever we are at the time. It's easy and it's not as messy. A lot of them eat it in their car. It's one of those good on the go treats.

[00:22:56] **David Crabill:** I Know you started by focusing On not just regular cupcakes. You wanted them to be gourmet. You wanted them to be special. Looking at your menu today, would you say that's true of most of the items on your table? Are they unique and special in some way? Or has that changed about your business over time?

[00:23:20] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I do have a lot more gourmet items, but I do find that my classic cookies fly off the shelf quickly. So the classic chocolate chip, sugar, and snickerdoodle are favorites. And I have to have them at every event. Those are the staples. And then I add the gourmet cookies as well.

[00:23:40] **David Crabill:** when you were starting the business, did you try doing just basic cupcakes, you know, non gourmet.

[00:23:50] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** When I started, no, but I did add them later.

[00:23:54] **David Crabill:** When you added them, did that work better, or was it the same?

[00:24:00] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** It was the same.

[00:24:00] And you don't know who you're gonna meet at an event and what they are looking for. So, You may have a group of people that want the plain and you have the friends that are with them and they want the gourmet.

[00:24:10] They want the bells and the whistles. So, you, I try to have something for everybody.

[00:24:14] **David Crabill:** And what is your pricing looking like for these events?

[00:24:18] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Um now it's probably like three dollars a cupcake and then the cake cups would probably be about six or seven dollars depending on flavors. And the slices run up to ten dollars. all dependent on the flavors and the size of them.

[00:24:34] **David Crabill:** People, have any issues with the pricing? I mean, I don't know what your area is like or what other bakers are charging.

[00:24:41] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** haven't run into any issues with any pricing. Maybe one or two people will say, Oh, that's too much for a cookie or two cookies. But it's usually that one comment.

[00:24:52] **David Crabill:** And how do you come up with your pricing?

[00:24:55] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I base it off of my ingredients, my time. And, how much profit I want to make.

[00:25:02] **David Crabill:** Do you change your pricing at all for one event versus the other? Like if you know you're going to be dealing with a bit higher end of a customer?

[00:25:12] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** No, I don't. I thought about that though. what I do need to change it on is based off of, I need to start adding in the vendor fee. I did realize that sometimes the vendor fee could be more expensive. And if I don't price my stuff, according to that, I'm really not making as much profit as I should be.

[00:25:30] **David Crabill:** What have the vendor fees looked like for these events? The most I've paid for a vendor event was 175. that one wasn't as successful. all the ones that are 50 or 75 that are usually the most successful.

[00:25:46] And what's the largest event you've done in terms of foot traffic?

[00:25:51] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I Would say the anime event from this year.

[00:25:55] **David Crabill:** Do you know how many people were there?

[00:25:59] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I'm not sure, but it was a two day event and we did 1,000 the first day and over 500 the second day.

[00:26:07] **David Crabill:** Did you sell out?

[00:26:09] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes, we had to come home and pay.

[00:26:12] **David Crabill:** So you could have done even more the second day.

[00:26:15] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes.

[00:26:18] **David Crabill:** You know, You did another event that I saw in your social feeds that I thought was pretty cool, which is a Habitat for Humanity event. Can you share a little bit about that?

[00:26:28] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes, I can. Actually, that was really exciting. At that time, when I was invited to do that event, It's the same day that I submitted my resignation letter to my full time job. It was stressful. It's been stressful for a few years and I was crying every day going to work, so I had to make a change and I knew that from praying and everything, I would say it was time for me to leave, but.

[00:26:51] I wasn't being obedient. So the day that I actually submitted my resignation letter to that job, I received multiple emails for events and the Habitat for Humanity was one of them. I was extremely excited. I didn't know what to do. I just, I was in tears. She wanted me to be a chef there. So we had to provide a sample of 500 guests. Which was extremely amazing and I didn't know how she heard of me and she sent it to my personal email So I don't even know where it came from and I said, are you sure you want me to be a chef? She was like, absolutely. She said I googled you but I was like, oh Okay We served desserts for about 500 people, it was sample sizes, and it was such an honor because I grew up in a Habitat home. My parents purchased a Habitat home when we were young, and it's just a wonderful experience for it to come full circle for me to help somebody else.

[00:27:45] Get home. Low income families and stuff. So, I don't know. I get so overwhelmed when I talk about it. I try not to cry.

[00:27:54] **David Crabill:** Yeah, that's, that's very cool.

[00:27:56] So you've done a lot of events. Are there other ways that you have promoted yourself or other venues or your items?

[00:28:06] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Now just doing the events and doing face to face conversation and just meeting Facebook and Instagram. Has there been anything you've tried in the past before these events really took off?

[00:28:20] actually I do go to the chamber of commerce, so I do new events. I go and network and stuff with them. And that actually pays off because meeting new people introduces you to other people. a great network. So I do. Make sure I attend the Chamber of commerce events.

[00:28:35] And I also just did a course, Project Opportunity. It's a business course for veterans to show us how to do the business pitch, the business plan, and. Things like that. So I've been networking with them as well.

[00:28:48] **David Crabill:** What do you feel like you learned from that course?

[00:28:52] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I Learned some of the things that I heard from other mentors where I was supposed to pay for certain items to be certified and how to register your business correctly. I did the business part right the first time, which was great, but some of the certification you do not have to pay for. The state came in and did presentations and showed you how to get different grants and how to be certified like Veteran O, Women O, and stuff like that.

[00:29:20] And you don't have to pay for it because you go straight through them.

[00:29:22] **David Crabill:** So there's a certification process for being women owned and, what's that process like? You just have to fill out an application through the state of Maryland. and then you get approved. The women owned one takes probably about two or three weeks to be approved and the veteran owned one they approve you within 24 hours.

[00:29:43] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** You just have to have all your veteran paperwork together.

[00:29:45] **David Crabill:** And then once you're certified, how does that benefit your business? Like do they promote you on their website at all? Or is it just something you can put on your website?

[00:29:58] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I can put it on my website and then they have a system where they put all of the businesses in and people can go there and click on those certain businesses that they want to do business with. And you'll also be able to do work with the state, and be able to bid on contracts.

[00:30:15] **David Crabill:** Oh, that's interesting. And so, what kind of contracts would those be for a baking business?

[00:30:24] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** It would be more like if the state was having an appreciation party or a business meeting or anything like that, they can order treats for their meetings or parties.

[00:30:35] **David Crabill:** And this is not something you were even aware of right, before you did this training?

[00:30:42] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** No, it's not.

[00:30:43] **David Crabill:** So this could have been something that you'd been taking advantage of for the last few years. And, and maybe could have gotten a different revenue and stream from that. So that's good information for anyone else out there who falls into some of these categories.

[00:31:01] I don't think it's been talked about on the podcast before. saw one of your most significant posts was from a couple years ago. You were very excited about becoming vendors at the Princess Royale Resort. Could you share a little bit about that? I couldn't really gather from the post that meant or, what kind of opportunity that brought your business.

[00:31:23] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** there was a lady who was getting married and she wanted to order cake and cupcakes. Because of the pandemic, it was really hard for her to find someone here to bake cupcakes for her. She was coming in from out of town. Ocean City is a big resort area. So a lot of people like to come down and get married and she was planning her whole wedding from, I think Pennsylvania and she couldn't find anyone.

[00:31:48] So she was making posts and someone tagged me on one of the groups or a couple of different groups. They tagged me to make her cake and cupcakes. So she reached out to me. I was a little on edge at the time because I wasn't sure if she was really a person or if this was a real thing, because there were a lot of scams going on, especially being contacted through Facebook.

[00:32:07] So I contacted Princess Royale and they confirmed that she was a real client and asked me a bunch of questions about the business. And they said, Oh, we're going to add you to our preferred vendor list. Is that okay? And I was like, Oh, that's amazing.

[00:32:20] It's listed on their website under preferred vendors.

[00:32:23] **David Crabill:** Has that actually translated into orders since then?

[00:32:29] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** It actually has not.

[00:32:31] **David Crabill:** guess it depends on how many preferred vendors they have listed on their website, right? I see that you have a jot form on your Facebook page for custom orders. Do you get many of those?

[00:32:46] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** not anymore. I used to get them often, but not anymore.

[00:32:50] **David Crabill:** And you feel like that's just because you're not promoting that aspect of your business? Or you're just too busy for them?

[00:32:58] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I think the events are taking over as for custom orders. I don't think a lot of people want to go through the form. They just want to call or send me a text to place an order instead of just clicking on the form. I think they find it easier to contact me directly.

[00:33:13] **David Crabill:** Now, as you've done bigger and bigger events, I imagine you're preparing a lot more baked goods for some of these events than you used to. Have you had an instance in which The event didn't go so well and you didn't sell as much as you hoped.

[00:33:31] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes, I have. My event kickoff for this year. It was their first time doing the event, but I thought it was much bigger than what it was. And I think they anticipated more traffic as well. We didn't sell a lot of stuff. I had a lot left over. So I came home and I went on Facebook where I message people that I know that would want to buy extra cupcakes and try to sell them that way.

[00:33:53] **David Crabill:** How successful would you say you were at selling your extras through social media?

[00:34:00] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** It didn't go as well as I hoped, even though I did a discount, a discounted rate.

[00:34:05] **David Crabill:** Well, it's not something that you do often, right? So it's not something that followers are really looking for.

[00:34:13] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Right. And it's like, at that moment, I needed to come and get it at that time. So you're not planning accordingly. So I can't tell you two days prior.

[00:34:24] **David Crabill:** So at the end of the day, you ended up having a lot of unsold inventory and probably couldn't freeze them or salvage them, you know, maybe just gave them away. So that's a pretty big hit on your business, financially. So what do you feel like you learned from that experience that you're carrying forward into future events?

[00:34:46] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Now I try to do my research prior to saying yes to these events. I try to stick to literally one batch of each item.

[00:34:55] **David Crabill:** When you say you do your research, what are you looking for in an event?

[00:35:01] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I'm looking for an organization. I want to know their previous foot traffic. And advertising, are they marketing? Or am I going to be the only one marketing, but I need everyone to market so you can get people there.

[00:35:17] **David Crabill:** Are there certain minimums or, at what point would you say, No, this event's not going to be worth my time.

[00:35:27] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I Would say based on one particular event, it was their vendor fee. That was a little bit of a turnoff for me. And then I talked to other vendors who have been successful at other events or have been to that event and asked them for their feedback and if they don't give me good feedback, then I'll just say no.

[00:35:44] **David Crabill:** So with the events that you're doing, you know, you're obviously Preparing a lot for each one. What does that week look like before a big event? Like, how are you prepping everything and what's your timeline looking like?

[00:36:01] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Okay, so on to prepare, I would say Sunday would be my day to shop and make sure I have every ingredient or item that I need. Monday, I'm making sure everything is there. I'll create a menu online. Then Tuesday I will make my cookie dough and get it all frozen. Tuesday and Wednesday, I would do that. And then I'll start baking one Thursday. And once I bake the cookies, I can go ahead and get my cupcakes in and just basically rotate. So the cupcakes are in or a cake is in, but I try not to keep that oven

running. Without anything in it. And my husband and my kids are really good because they come in and they clean up so I can continue baking or, um, making batter.

[00:36:46] I'll call them out. Sometimes I go, dishwasher! They'll come in and make sure the dishes are done and stuff so I can continue working. Now I wish I had more space because sometimes it's a lot of us in the kitchen at once. And then, usually Friday Night, my sister would come over after work and her boyfriend would come and my husband's here and they're packing. I'm printing the labels and getting them everything they need. They're packaging everything, putting things in refrigerators. Even my husband gets the cooler ready. we don't get the cooler ready to get it packed till the morning of. He has to chill it overnight so we can keep temps, especially now with the getting pretty hot.

[00:37:22] We want to keep everything cool. So it's not melting. And he does all the. Loading of the vehicle and then when we get there, he unloads and sets the tent up. The guys pretty much do all the heavy lifting for us. usually a busy week.

[00:37:33] **David Crabill:** You feel like your home kitchen is maxed out at this point?

[00:37:41] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yeah, definitely. Because we have to figure out dinner for the family during the week. Because if I'm using it for baking, we're not cooking dinner. So we have to order out and just basically figure it out. Sometimes we do sandwiches or like really quick meals so I can get in and get to work. So another kitchen would be great.

[00:38:00] **David Crabill:** Are you looking into moving out of your home kitchen at some point?

[00:38:05] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes, I am researching places now.

[00:38:09] **David Crabill:** and I know you'd like to get back into doing some of those perishable items too. So are you thinking right now that you would rent a kitchen?

[00:38:19] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** yes, I gotta make sure the location's right and kind of get my feet wet a little bit out there.

[00:38:24] **David Crabill:** Have you looked too much? Like Are there a lot of places around you and a lot of options?

[00:38:30] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Not for kitchen. I'm seeing a lot of office space rentals here and I'm seeing spaces that can't be converted. Well, it would have to be fully converted into a kitchen and I think that would be more costly because we have to put in the correct sewage lines and change the HVAC system and It's a lot of stuff that they require.

[00:38:50] **David Crabill:** Are you pretty much just looking at shared kitchens?

[00:38:54] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** We don't have any in our area. Yeah, I wish we did.

[00:38:58] **David Crabill:** Oh, okay. So where are you looking for these kitchens?

[00:39:04] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I'm looking for

[00:39:06] something that actually had a commercial kitchen in it prior to me going in. So any restaurants or old bakeries or Something like that.

[00:39:16] **David Crabill:** So are you looking, when you say you're going to rent a kitchen, you're looking for a place to rent. That has a kitchen in it, but it would be just you. It would be solely your own rental, right?

[00:39:29] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes. Right.

[00:39:32] **David Crabill:** I'm trying to remember if there's anybody I know that's fallen into that category.

[00:39:38] That's pretty hard to find, I would say. You know, Typically if you didn't have a shared kitchen, you'd be looking more at places that use their kitchen, but then rent you the kitchen at certain times, you know, like maybe a church or a community center. Some farms have commercial kitchens on them.

[00:39:58] Have you looked into anything like that?

[00:40:00] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I have not. So now I'm gonna write that down and I'm gonna look for that now.

[00:40:07] **David Crabill:** Obviously any restaurant, most food service establishments, you know, would have a kitchen in it, but the problem there is obvious. That the timing's not usually convenient in terms of when they're using

the kitchen and when you want to. But oftentimes, you know, if a bar has a kitchen in it, that could be a good opportunity because, you know, they're probably more likely to use it at night and then it might be open during the day.

[00:40:34] So yeah, if you ask around, and even if you ask at events, you might find an opportunity that crops up that you never knew is there, or never expected, just sort of like how your business has gone in a direction that you never expected,

[00:40:48] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Right

[00:40:49] **David Crabill:** Well, I know you run this business with your sister, Chakirah, and she's very involved in the business, too. So how do you guys split duties in the business?

[00:41:04] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** So we'll come up with a menu together and we'll discuss who is going to make what. And then we'll make it throughout the week, certain things. Like the cookie dough can be made ahead of time and frozen, and then we'll decide who's going to bake and to package things.

[00:41:21] And then once we get to the event, Chakirah usually sets up the display. I'll usually be writing the menu and doing little tasks or helping my husband put up the banners and stuff like that while she's setting up the table.

[00:41:34] I would say she does most of the sales because she loves talking to people too. And that's what she's used to. That's her goal. I think it excites her a lot to talk to people. So she does most of the talking and sales once we're at the events.

[00:41:47] **David Crabill:** Now, if she wasn't involved in the business, would the business look the same and you just carry more of a burden, or would it look differently today?

[00:42:00] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I think it would look the same and I'd just carry more of the burden. Yeah, because I would just carry on.

[00:42:04] **David Crabill:** And do you do all the business stuff for it? Social marketing, everything like that.

[00:42:12] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes. She does some of the social media.

[00:42:15] **David Crabill:** have over a thousand followers on social media. What have you learned and what have you tried to boost your follower base there?

[00:42:26] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I try to post daily. I was told before to like to post once daily. Don't over flood it. But uh, when Chakirah took over the social media she decided, oh I'm just gonna post. So she was posting like three times a day and it started growing from there. So I think that was working.

[00:42:45] **David Crabill:** And this is on Facebook, right?

[00:42:49] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Facebook and Instagram.

[00:42:51] **David Crabill:** It was one growing, then the other wasn't when she was posting more often, or are they both growing kind of at the same time?

[00:42:59] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Facebook is growing more. Instagram doesn't really, hasn't really moved much.

[00:43:05] **David Crabill:** Yeah. And she has a day job.

[00:43:10] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Yes, she does.

[00:43:12] **David Crabill:** And do you have a day job in addition to this?

[00:43:15] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I started working part time as a substitute.

[00:43:17] so that way I can focus on the business more.

[00:43:20] **David Crabill:** And what did you do before this?

[00:43:23] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I was a preschool teacher year round.

[00:43:27] **David Crabill:** I know you said you did the sales job. So you were a preschool teacher after the sales job

[00:43:33] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** And during, yes.

[00:43:35] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like that taught you anything that you've carried forward into the business?

[00:43:40] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** To be resilient, because things change often in the classroom. Some days you don't know what you're gonna get, or which little Johnny is gonna do, or what he's gonna do next. So you have to be prepared for the kids and be like, I don't know, you gotta Be ready before they get there. And before those behaviors occur, you have to be prepared ahead of time.

[00:44:01] So I do the same thing in my business. Just be prepared and be resilient because anytime it can take a change, things can shift in a matter of a minute. So you just need to be prepared for it and trust the process.

[00:44:13] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I have a couple of kids in preschool right now, and I have the utmost respect for preschool teachers, and I'm like, I don't think this is a job that I could do.

[00:44:25] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** It's a tough job. you kind of got to be an octopus to be a teacher.

[00:44:29] **David Crabill:** So what about wholesale? I know that, in 2019 Maryland changed their law to allow it. Is that something you've looked into?

[00:44:39] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I have looked into it. I just didn't make any moves towards it.

[00:44:43] **David Crabill:** And why is that? Is it just because the events have gone so well and you haven't had time? Is it not? As interesting to you to sell, you know, without interacting with the customer.

[00:44:56] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** It's more because of the events. The events took off. That's where my focus is.

[00:45:01] **David Crabill:** It sounds like the business is going pretty well. What are you looking forward to? What are your current goals for your business?

[00:45:13] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I actually want to get a, trailer or a, a small food truck to be able to serve desserts from to make it a lot easier while we're doing all these events, especially now that they're all coming up on me back to back. I think it'll be a lot easier for me to just drive and not have to set up the tent, the tables and all the display pieces and things like that.

[00:45:34] So my goal right now is to find a vehicle or trailer to use.

[00:45:41] **David Crabill:** So are most of these events they have like an outdoor food truck area. They're not just indoor events.

[00:45:50] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** right? It's a lot of outdoor events.

[00:45:53] **David Crabill:** And I don't know if you'd have to get some different permitting. To be able to sell out of the food truck, or not.

[00:46:02] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** did ask and they told me as long as I was baking at home and not baking on the food truck, I was fine.

[00:46:09] **David Crabill:** Alright, yeah, that sounds good. So as you think about all that you've learned with your cottage food business, what's something that you would recommend to somebody who's starting out on their cottage food journey today?

[00:46:22] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I would say to not get discouraged because you do see what's not allowed. And I don't want you to focus on what's not allowed. Look at the, there's a multitude of things that we can do. So you have to look at the positive aspects of it and overcome the obstacles and stay the course, just never give up. And as I said, many times on this podcast, trust the process. The road is not easy, but you can do it.

[00:46:48] **David Crabill:** As you think back over the past few years, is there any moment that sticks out as being particularly memorable? I

[00:47:00] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** I would say the Habitat event, that's been on my mind all the time. The way that the shift changed with the business, I would say, is finally being obedient and listening to God and actually doing what He said to do. When I put in that resignation, the business took off. Receiving all those emails and event after event after event, Everything just aligned. And so as long as I'm obedient and following his directions, that's big for me. So I have to stay focused and keep striving. And I think that's the big thing for me is when I actually resigned from being a full time teacher and the business took off from there.

[00:47:35] **David Crabill:** Ka'Terra, thank you so much for coming and 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?

[00:47:48] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** They can find us on Facebook and Instagram, SweetAddiction21811 is our handle.

[00:47:56] **David Crabill:** Perfect. Well, thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today.

[00:48:02] **Ka'Terra Dettbarn:** Thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

[00:48:09] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager Podcast.

[00:48:12] For more information about this episode, go to forrager.com/podcast/120.

[00:48:18] And if you're enjoying this podcast, please take a quick moment right now and leave me a review on Apple Podcasts. It doesn't have to be a long review, but it's truly the best way to support the show and help others like you find this podcast.

[00:48:30] And finally, if you're thinking about selling your own homemade food, check out my free mini course where I walk you through the steps you need to take to get a cottage food business off the ground. To get the course, go to cottagefoodcourse.com.

[00:48:44] Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.