

# Alexis Kron with Bakednaz

**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 Alexis Kron.

[00:00:11] But real quick, I wanted to check, have you created a website for your business yet?

[00:00:16] And if you have, do you pay for it? 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 an hour.

[00:00:37] 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).

[00:00:55] Alright so I have Alexis on the show today. She lives in Bullhead City, Arizona and sells luxury cakes and baked treats with her cottage food business, Bakednaz. Alexis started her business right at the beginning of the pandemic. And initially, she actually faced quite a bit of resistance from other bakers in her area.

[00:01:18] But by focusing on serving customers and producing excellent products, she's turned her business into a success. I really appreciated how open and honest Alexis was in this interview. Not just with sharing plenty of business advice, but also sharing how her very challenging childhood influenced her entrepreneurial journey. And with that, let's jump right into this episode. Welcome to the show, Alexis. Nice to have you here.

[00:01:49] **Alexis Kron:** Thank you for having me.

[00:01:51] **David Crabill:** Well, Alexis, can you take me back to the beginning of this journey? How did it all get started?

[00:01:55] **Alexis Kron:** So, post COVID, well, maybe the month before COVID, so where I'm at, salons were the last thing to shut down. I did hair for 10 years. The month before they shut all the salons down, I decided that I was

going to start baking and see if I could sell it. It turned out to be pretty successful. So I guess within two weeks I left my job. I just decided to leave there and go forward with the baking. During that time, you would think that it wouldn't flourish because, you know, everybody was really scared of COVID, but it actually ended up being quite successful, so that's kind of how I started it. Was this something that you had been thinking about, transitioning to cakes? Had you been thinking about that for a long time?

[00:02:50] Honestly, I,

[00:02:52] it wasn't even something that I saw myself doing. Baking seemed to be something that was unattainable. It looked so hard. But I didn't want to do hair anymore. It's really physical labor. And it's very oversaturated in my area. So I still wanted to find something that gave me a creative outlet .

[00:03:12] **David Crabill:** Was baking something that you had a background in, or were you just trying to find another creative outlet

[00:03:20] **Alexis Kron:** No, I just enjoyed cooking. I really enjoyed cooking. So, I decided that I would take up baking. I just turned out to be. Really good at it. I guess it's one of those things where you have a hidden talent and you don't really know that you have it until you tap into it.

[00:03:37] **David Crabill:** and What allowed you to discover that you had that talent? Like, when did it start?

[00:03:44] **Alexis Kron:** It was pretty much right around the time that I started my business. Once I realized that I was good at it, it was something that I became passionate about. I always loved to cook. I cooked with my grandma a lot growing up. And one of my aunts, they both cooked a lot. So it wasn't like it was something that I just stumbled on, but baking wasn't something I did often. I just kind of moved into that. And once I tapped into it and realized you don't have to do the same thing every day, there's so many different things that you can make, I realized it was something that I really enjoyed doing. I feel like once you become passionate about something, it's not really a job anymore.

[00:04:28] It is a job for me, but I'm passionate about it, so I don't mind it. I really love what I do. So,

[00:04:35] **David Crabill:** You discovered that you loved baking, and why did you jump to, you know, starting your own business versus maybe trying to go work at a bakery?

[00:04:46] **Alexis Kron:** There was a period of time that I picked up a part time job during COVID. One of my good friends was, um, a manager at a local gas station, but they have a full blown kitchen in there. The job started out one day a week, part time, and actually stumbled into full time management, so I took a step back from baking.

[00:05:08] Six years ago, I had twins. I ended up with a really bad hernia. Well, a year into working that job, my doctor pretty much let me know that I shouldn't be working. Or throwing boxes or, you know, all of those things that were like strenuous physical labor. So I got pulled out of work suddenly and it was financially devastating for my family.

[00:05:30] I decided to pick up baking again. And since I had nothing but time to devote to it, I really got serious about it. And that time around, you know, that's kind of. Where I really found that it was something I enjoyed doing.

[00:05:45] **David Crabill:** And Did you have any business experience before this? Have you always worked at a job?

[00:05:53] **Alexis Kron:** I've always worked at a job. I mean, Doing hair, I did some booth rentals. So essentially I did own my own business prior to this. I also had a vending machine that I dealt with that was mine and my partner's. So I wouldn't say I was a stranger to the business aspect of it, but definitely never thought about it.

[00:06:15] A full blown business the way that it is now.

[00:06:18] **David Crabill:** What are some of the skills or the knowledge you feel like you carried into this business that helped you?

[00:06:28] **Alexis Kron:** Doing hair and having to provide your own product really shows you about profitability, margin, cost, overhead. I knew what I needed to be at as far as cost and profit and how to kind of work around those things. It's definitely different with food costs and ingredients. You're not getting them all from the same vendor or the same place, like, it's a lot more in depth, but I feel like that helped me kind of get a leg up.

[00:06:55] **David Crabill:** Now, starting during the pandemic, it's obviously a pretty interesting time to be starting a business. Do you feel like the pandemic helped your business or made it more challenging to start your business?

[00:07:07] **Alexis Kron:** I definitely can agree with you on it being like a challenging time where you would think that a lot of people wouldn't want to purchase food that was prepared in a cottage kitchen in someone's home. but I live in such a small town, pretty much a rural area, a lot of places are closed and they don't have a lot of options.

[00:07:28] And I also offer a delivery option. So I feel like that really helped my business flourish because people were scared. They weren't leaving home. They didn't want to go out and do things or the places that they would get things from were closed. So They were really seeking alternative routes for the same things that they may have been able to get pre COVID .

[00:07:50] **David Crabill:** Now, if the pandemic had not happened, Would you have still started this business in 2020? Like, was that going to happen anyway?

[00:08:01] **Alexis Kron:** Honestly, I think it, it may very well may not have because I don't know that I would have been looking to, you know, get out of like a regular nine to five job, you know what I mean? I did start it before the shutdown, but you know, there was already so much scare and propaganda going around.

[00:08:21] I have three small kids, so I was already, you know, thinking about ways for me to be able to step away from my job regardless of whether they had shut it down or not, so maybe I would have. But if COVID had not happened or they weren't talking about it, I don't know that I would have even ventured into that.

[00:08:40] **David Crabill:** Well, there certainly were a lot of people who started bakeries during the pandemic and found, like yourself, that it was quite lucrative. What were the first few months like for you, in terms of orders? Like, what did that look like?

[00:08:57] **Alexis Kron:** Where I live, we live in a state where there's some pretty strict cottage laws. And when I first started, I was unaware of them. So I was making banana pudding, which is against cottage laws here. So I, even though I did make a lot of money, Uh, the health department sent me a couple notices.

[00:09:16] I had a couple of run-ins with other local bakers who were upset. I was unaware of all of the laws. So though, even though I was making a fair amount of money, I was dealing with a lot of stuff on the back end that caused

me to educate myself. Further and really figure out what the laws were, what I could and couldn't do, and what I was and wasn't able to sell.

[00:09:39] So the first couple of months were really rough. I was stressed out a lot. It really even sent me into thinking about whether I wanted to do it or not. In a small town, people are super competitive. A lot of the bakers are really nice, but there are some who are Not very nice. So they'll go to any lengths to try to have you shut down.

[00:09:59] So I did deal with that a lot in the beginning and it was really hard.

[00:10:02] **David Crabill:** That's interesting. So, Would you say that you had a hard time finding customers in the beginning, or did that seem to be easy?

[00:10:11] **Alexis Kron:** The customers weren't the hard part. The hard part for me was getting acceptance into the small town food community, you know, small businesses, food trucks. Other people who baked there weren't a lot of them back then, obviously it's gotten way more popular as the population has grown out here. But back when I first started there were just a handful of people and it was difficult, you know what I mean?

[00:10:39] They really, really were mean. So it made me feel disheartened, almost discouraged.

[00:10:45] **David Crabill:** So, that's interesting. So, You were making items that you're not allowed to make under the cottage food law, and so There were other bakers out there that were reporting you. So you were getting contacted by the health department.

[00:10:59] **Alexis Kron:** Yes, definitely, yeah. That's exactly what happened.

[00:11:02] **David Crabill:** That is not typical. So it's kind of interesting to hear about that competitiveness in your environment. I mean, it happens sometimes, but usually when people sell something that they're not allowed to sell, especially when they're just getting started, like nobody cares or nobody notices. I mean, that's more typical.

[00:11:23] So that's pretty interesting. And then you obviously made some adjustments to bring yourself in line with the cottage food law, and like, when do you feel like you became accepted into the food community?

[00:11:37] **Alexis Kron:** I feel like I had to force my way into acceptance. You know, I've worked really, really hard the past year and a half too. I wouldn't say I like to perfect my craft, because nobody's perfect, but I pay attention to detail. I work really hard on my designs. I Feel like coming back to it, I had to find something that other people in this town don't offer.

[00:12:02] Like a certain style of decorating or a certain style of cake or any type of the things that I offer. And once my following grew bigger and people were coming to me for custom orders, it just kind of got to a point where people were like, okay well, maybe she's not going anywhere. We're not going to scare her off.

[00:12:24] so I kind of just had to create my own lane per se, start doing something that I don't see other people offering.

[00:12:31] **David Crabill:** You had mentioned that, resistance and competitiveness made you consider quitting. What do you feel like kept you going at that time? Thank you.

[00:12:42] **Alexis Kron:** To be honest, I would have to say, it's my support system at home. My partner, you know, he always told me, don't let people convince you to give up. Don't let people get to you because that's what they want. They want that reaction. They want you to stop, they want you to give up, they feel threatened, you know, if your work is that good and other people who are baking, if they're busy, they shouldn't be spending their time worried about what I'm doing, So the support that I got from him and the support that I got from the customers that I have is what really kept me going and the passion for it, you know, the better I got at it, the more I wanted to do it.

[00:13:24] **David Crabill:** You described you know, kind of finding a style. How would you describe your style of cakes?

[00:13:30] **Alexis Kron:** I would describe my style as sophisticated glam. I say that because it's a lot of sparkle, a lot of shine, a lot of flashy details, but in the same breath, there's a lot of elegance in the design as well. They're well thought out, well planned. Every cake that I make is one of a kind. You're not going to get that same cake anywhere else from anybody else ever again.

[00:13:57] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like your style came from what customers were asking for or requesting, or was it more from what you wanted to create?

[00:14:10] **Alexis Kron:** It was more so what I wanted to create, the vision that I had in mind social media has a huge presence of cottage bakers and custom cake people and people who make custom design desserts, where I live at in the small town, there's a lot of bakers, but there's not a lot of bakers that offer customized designs for trendy cake ideas.

[00:14:34] I feel like it's a lot of old school bakers, and there's nothing wrong with that. They do beautiful work, but I just felt like there was a gap between the trendy designs that you see online versus the cakes that I saw locally in my town. And I kind of wanted to fill that gap. So I figured I would find something that I don't see as often or that isn't offered here where I live.

[00:15:01] And there's no competition because people are not offering that.

[00:15:05] **David Crabill:** Was that something that you did because you felt like it was a good business strategy, or do you think you just were. Interested in these trendy designs.

[00:15:18] **Alexis Kron:** To be honest, I think it's a combination of both. I feel like it was definitely a good business strategy. Where I live, the town is growing rapidly, literally day by day. A lot of people move in from metropolitan areas looking for services that they cannot get in a smaller, more rural town. So I do feel like bringing something to the forefront that people don't have to travel to Las Vegas or Phoenix to get a huge business aspect to it, but I also, I just enjoy that style.

[00:15:54] I really enjoy the glamorous, glitter, sparkly, big, over the top cakes. That's what I enjoy doing.

[00:16:03] **David Crabill:** Now, I can see in your marketing that you really focus on the word luxury. These are luxury cakes, and I assume luxury pricing along with those. you start that way? Do you feel like your pricing has always been high?

[00:16:20] **Alexis Kron:** It has not always been high. Five years ago when I started, I was charging, you know, maybe \$75 for a cake that today I charge \$200 for. Obviously the price of groceries has skyrocketed exponentially from that point in time five years ago, but I also have worked extremely hard on improving my skill set, the quality of ingredients that I use, and the time that it takes.

[00:16:49] When you make custom cakes, you can't just go to the store and buy some of the stuff that goes on the cake. Sometimes you have to have it made. If you don't make custom toppers, you're going to have to outsource. Some people who make custom cake toppers, the prices can get upwards of almost 50. So you, you know, if you have to outsource a certain design from a customer, the price definitely does go up at that point. But you're not just paying for the ingredients, you're paying for my time, you're paying for my skills, you're paying for the consultation, you're paying for the luxury experience of not having to worry about any of that.

[00:17:27] I feel like when people come to me for weddings, anniversaries, christenings, birthdays, first birthdays, They already have so many things that they're trying to worry about. I try to bring a service to my clients where this part of it, they don't have to worry about any of that.

[00:17:45] From start to finish, I take care of it all. Even the candles, down to every little single detail. And I feel like that is a luxury service that I offer. You can't just get that when you go pick up a cake from maybe a chain grocery store.

[00:18:01] **David Crabill:** So what are the prices that you have right now?

[00:18:05] **Alexis Kron:** My cakes start as small as 4 inch rounds and those start at \$65, and my prices go up from there, so \$65 would be the smallest cake, and then they go up to \$100, and then from there they go up to \$120, \$150, \$175, It all just depends on the level of customization and how large the cake is.

[00:18:31] **David Crabill:** What's the most expensive cake you've made so far?

[00:18:36] **Alexis Kron:** I did a wedding order this year in April. It would have been a three tier cake, but we decided to break it down. That cake would have been \$700 so the combination of the order combined with the treats and the cake was about \$900.

[00:18:51] Do you feel like You face much resistance to pricing from people once they learn what your pricing is?

[00:19:00] **Alexis Kron:** I'm pretty transparent about that. I have my starting prices listed in my highlights on my page. I try my best to be transparent about pricing up front. I'm not hiding how much I charge for my work because I don't want people to feel uncomfortable when they ask. I do face resistance. I have some people who Will message me and go through a thorough consultation and spend 30 minutes talking to them.

[00:19:27] And then I'll give them a price and they don't respond. I do have some people who will be honest and upfront and say, Hey, that's kind of out of my budget. When that happens, I try to work with people, you know, I do offer some more cost effective. Treats that still have a luxurious feel and look and they still taste great.

[00:19:46] I have to remind myself often I am not my ideal client either because to be honest with you sometimes I wouldn't even pay my own prices. But I feel like that has to do with what people are and aren't willing to spend money on. Some people will spend \$300 on a pair of shoes where somebody else will laugh at them and say, that's ludicrous.

[00:20:07] I'd never do that.

[00:20:08] **David Crabill:** Yeah, that's interesting. I don't know if anyone's talked on the podcast before about, Not being their own ideal customer, and I think that happens a lot though

[00:20:20] has that been something that has been challenging for you to justify your pricing? Because it's not the kind of pricing that you would be willing to pay?

[00:20:32] **Alexis Kron:** Sometimes it can be challenging because there are some people you just can't please, no matter what kind of explanation or breakdown you give them. They just don't see a justification in. Paying 200 for a cake but then they'll go and try it themselves and then they'll realize why they're paying somebody an insane amount of money for something like that.

[00:20:55] It takes a lot of skill. It's hard. It's a lot of work. it is a little disheartening when you're trying to explain to people and they don't understand, people say some pretty rude or rotten stuff, but. It's my business. I pay my bills with it. I make a living from it.

[00:21:10] I'm not just doing this for a hobby. I love what I do and I'm passionate about it. But I also have a family to raise, you know, so I'm not going to only be doing it for the purpose of making my money back. I have to make a profit.

[00:21:27] **David Crabill:** You mentioned that sometimes you'll go through like, a 30 minute consult, and then people will say, ooh, no, or they might just not contact you ever again. Have you done anything to try to mitigate that, or

prevent that from happening, where you put in, obviously, a significant amount of your own time to something that doesn't work out?

[00:21:47] **Alexis Kron:** It can be frustrating for sure. Last week I had a rough week where I did have quite a few people ghost me where they would go through that consultation and then say nothing back. But I've also found that instead of overworking myself to the point that I am not presently showing up for my kids.

[00:22:07] If I charge accordingly, let's say I do 20 consultations in one day and only eight people out of those 20 people book, but they're booking a cake at \$250 versus me charging \$100 for all 20 people. Now I'm overworked, underpaid, and I didn't make any profit.

[00:22:28] **David Crabill:** Have you ever considered charging for a consultation?

[00:22:32] **Alexis Kron:** I have thought about that, but I feel like that might detour some people. Because when you're inquiring about a service with a business, I feel like it's unfair to charge somebody money for a service they haven't received yet. You want to promote your business. You want to build rapport with people.

[00:22:52] So I feel like if you're charging them right off the bat, before you even get started, It feels too much like a business transaction and right now times are hard. People want to feel valued

[00:23:05] **David Crabill:** What's the process like for setting up that consultation in the first place?

[00:23:11] **Alexis Kron:** So a lot of times people will send me a message and a picture of something that they have an idea that they want. A lot of times people just send the picture and say, how much for this cake? And my rebuttal to that is always, I need a date. A theme or design and how many people you'll be serving.

[00:23:33] Those questions can generally give me enough information to give them a rough estimate and then we decide whether they want to go through or not. I have found that by shortening that version in the beginning it cuts off me having to do a 20 or 30 minute consultation. And then give them a price at the end.

[00:23:53] And they're like, no, thank you. So I didn't waste their time and they didn't waste mine.

[00:23:57] **David Crabill:** Have you ever tried to create a form to reduce the kind of back and forth that you're talking about? Like it a little bit more systematized?

[00:24:08] **Alexis Kron:** There are a lot of things that I do want to implement. But I have gotten so busy I do mostly everything by myself from the baking, the decorating, the dropping off, the marketing, the advertising, everything. I also have kids, so sometimes it's a little hard to find the time to really sit down and prioritize those things.

[00:24:33] They're definitely important, but I also feel like The relevance of a small business being able to be personable and relatable with your customers is sometimes a lot of the reason why people prefer small business over filling out a form or you know what I mean? it just doesn't feel the same.

[00:24:51] **David Crabill:** Now, do you do only custom orders, or do you also do events, or something else?

[00:24:59] **Alexis Kron:** I don't do farmers markets as of now. I did one when I first started and it was, it was semi successful, but it's so hot out here that I feel like the quality of the desserts would suffer, even though they're shelf stable. You can't put a hundred cookies on a table in 90 degree weather and expect them to stay good looking. I do host a lot of sales personally, so I'll do like a bakery cake and cut it into slices and sell them, or cookies and stuff. I make a variety of items but I do feel like custom cakes are where my bread and butter is.

[00:25:38] **David Crabill:** So other than the custom cakes what do you sell?

[00:25:43] **Alexis Kron:** So I do a lot of variety treat boxes. So not everybody likes to eat cake for their birthday so some of my customers will pretty much give me a budget and a theme and ask me to design an assorted box. So today I have an order due for a gentleman and he's not a big fan of cake.

[00:26:06] So we're making some cookies, a couple of strawberry shortcake parfaits, and then some hand pies. I feel like everybody likes to have options. It's cliché to think that everybody only wants cake for their birthday.

[00:26:22] **David Crabill:** Now, I know you focus a lot on the luxury branding. Is that also the case for these other treats, like a cookie?

[00:26:31] **Alexis Kron:** Yes, it is. Definitely. Everything in my brand is targeted for a luxury theme, feel, taste. I spend a lot of time on all of it. The flavor, the baking, the presentation. Whenever I make chocolate chip cookies, every single chocolate chip is hand placed on top of that cookie after they come out of the oven.

[00:26:55] Every single one, whether it's one dozen or 12 dozen, is hand placed on every single cookie by me every time.

[00:27:02] Anybody that buys from me, pretty much, it's almost like a standard. Everything that I bake has edible luster dust on it for the most part. If you get a dozen cookies from me, they're more than not going to have glitter on them. They're gonna be in a pink box. They're going to have pink wax paper underneath them.

[00:27:23] The aesthetic is a huge part of my brand.

[00:27:25] **David Crabill:** Do you change that up for, say, a guy's birthday party instead of a girl's? Like, they might not want the glitter and glam.

[00:27:37] **Alexis Kron:** Yeah. Yeah. it can be customized to pretty much every need and want. For the men, a lot of times I will do like edible gold flakes. So it still has a nice, rich, luxurious feel, but it's not. Feminine. It still has a masculine edge to it.

[00:27:55] Of course a lot of men are not going to be asking for a box of chocolate covered strawberries on Valentine's day, but it's the thought that counts.

[00:28:06] A lot of times people want to feel valued, luxurious, spoiled, you know what I mean? A lot of my target customers are women and, you know, we like to spoil our other halves on holidays, but it's hard. To find male themed ideas. So I do offer things that are more on the masculine side as well. I don't feel like it's fair to be, you know, gender biased or any of that.

[00:28:32] Everybody. If they come to me with an idea, I put it into fruition.

[00:28:36] **David Crabill:** Now you talked about the packaging and how you try to pay attention to every detail. So what is your packaging looking like? Like where do you get it from? And how do you try to make it high end?

[00:28:50] **Alexis Kron:** So, I get my packaging from various places. Obviously, Amazon is extremely popular. You have a two day prime. So it's easy for me to take a last minute order and grab some packaging and have it delivered within 48 hours. I live really close to Las Vegas and they have a really great cake store out there that carries a lot of high end packaging.

[00:29:15] So I just. I just stopped in there the other day and grabbed a good amount of stuff. And then I do have a Hobby Lobby here locally as well, so they carry a fair amount of stuff. a lot of times I will buy cupcake boxes and customize them myself, so take the inserts out and cut them to fit what I would like them to look like, so that you can't get the packaging anywhere else.

[00:29:39] Yes, you can buy the same box, but it's not gonna have the same feel or the same look. Every dessert that I do, from the way it's packaged to the way it goes out the door, is literally a well thought out plan.

[00:29:51] **David Crabill:** And you said you do all custom orders, right?

[00:29:56] **Alexis Kron:** Yes.

[00:29:57] **David Crabill:** So it's pretty interesting that you focus so much on packaging since. I often think of that more as trying to get people to buy the product in advance, you know, like they see the packaging, it looks appealing, then they buy at the market, whereas in this case, everyone's getting the packaging after they've already paid you, right?

[00:30:18] **Alexis Kron:** Correct. I usually do 50 percent up front, and then 50 percent when I drop off or they pick up. I generally don't have any issues with that, that's almost been one of the most seamless portions of the business, believe it or not.

[00:30:35] **David Crabill:** Now, in terms of dropping off or picking up, I mean, I'm thinking about the heat in Arizona, you know, often 120 degrees, I imagine there are problems with that. So how have you gotten around some of those issues?

[00:30:52] **Alexis Kron:** So I, whenever I make large custom cakes, 9 out of 10 times I will deliver those. Sometimes people are unaware of how to properly

transport them. They need to go on a flat floorboard in the car with the A. C. on full blast. You can't stop anywhere in between. You can't hit the corners, do a 95. So there are a lot of aspects that I deal with personally just to ensure quality, but I also use cool bags or insulated bags, or the good thing about cookies and certain baked goods is they freeze extremely well.

[00:31:29] So I'll freeze them once they're packaged. And then once I go to deliver, by the time they make it to their home, they're not frozen anymore, but they're not melted.

[00:31:38] **David Crabill:** Do you make your buttercream a certain way just to accommodate the heat. Like, Is your buttercream specifically tailored to be more resistant to the hot weather.

[00:31:53] **Alexis Kron:** It was another thing that I had to really work on, because you have to find ways to combat that. But essentially, no matter what butter melts. Doesn't matter what you add to it, how stable you make your buttercream, there are just certain laws of science that you can't get around. So I always include care cards with every single cake order that people get.

[00:32:18] It explains to them the temperature they need to keep it at, how to cut it, how to store it, when they should remove it from the fridge, how long it should be out, what temperatures it should and shouldn't be exposed to. I'm very thorough. I feel like when people spend that amount of money, they also should be educated on how to keep their investment.

[00:32:40] From being ruined, because let's face it, you're spending hundreds of dollars on something that people are going to eat for the wow factor. If you take the wow factor out of it, then you feel like you got bamboozled.

[00:32:52] **David Crabill:** What do you do to promote yourself or promote your business? Do you go to shows? Do you just do word of mouth? What is it?

[00:33:02] **Alexis Kron:** It's literally all been word of mouth. We do have some local Facebook groups where there's thousands of followers that all live in town. So a lot of small businesses here use pages like that to promote themselves. But I do feel like a lot of my clients are from word of mouth.

[00:33:23] Word of mouth is huge out here. I don't know why, but I guess people just feel safer when they have recommendations from people that they trust. So I do rely on word of mouth quite a bit.

[00:33:33] **David Crabill:** I see that you're very active on social media, and especially Instagram. So what have you learned about promoting yourself through social media?

[00:33:45] **Alexis Kron:** Social media is a different kind of beast. You literally have to be committed to it. You have to stay consistent every single day and you have to give people valued content. You know what I mean? Like, yes, they want to look at the desserts that you make, but if you're not bringing anything to the table that they can learn from, benefit from, or educate themselves on they don't really deem it as valuable content.

[00:34:13] So one thing I had to learn when I got really serious about the content side of it was, you know, It is also a job in itself. It takes a lot of dedication.

[00:34:22] **David Crabill:** Yeah. I noticed that you don't just like to post about your business, but you're posting for other entrepreneurs too, right?

[00:34:31] **Alexis Kron:** Correct. So is your goal with the social media posts to increase your cake business? Or is it more because you're trying to make that a business in and of itself.

[00:34:45] everything has its own little world. So like the online baking world, I feel like a lot of people are really mean. They don't want to share valuable content or ideas or recipes or anything that is going to help somebody else get ahead if it's not the person sharing it. I don't want to be that person. I want to be somebody that people can feel comfortable coming to, knowing that I'm going to give them valuable knowledge. I wish I would have had that tool. When I first started. It's really hard when you don't know what to do.

[00:35:18] **David Crabill:** That is interesting that you say that you feel like people are mean and withhold information because they feel like there's so much information out there now about how to start a business. And, I'm not saying there shouldn't be more but usually. I feel like most of the guests on the podcast say that the cottage food community is very supportive, very collaborative but you haven't really felt that or found that to be the case.

[00:35:48] **Alexis Kron:** I wouldn't necessarily say that. There are a lot of very supportive people. I do follow a lot of bakers and a lot of bakers follow me and we've built some really great connections. but I, I also feel like sometimes people are very judgmental about the way people's things look. If they don't look the greatest, they're not so supportive or.

[00:36:12] It sounds kind of silly, but when somebody's like first starting out a business endeavor, let's just say they post a cake they made and it gets zero likes, zero comments. We all know it doesn't look that great. But it doesn't hurt people to be nice or to be supportive, like nobody ever stepped foot inside a bakery with no experience and said, I could make a three tier cake look amazing with no experience.

[00:36:38] With everything you do in life, as far as a skill is concerned, you have to start somewhere. So I feel like. I just don't want to be like the masses of people who are so mean about stuff like that. I just try to be a light, in a room full of darkness sometimes. It's not always that way but it doesn't cost anything to be nice.

[00:37:00] **David Crabill:** I saw a post on your social media that talked about how you had a difficult upbringing and you like to pull yourself out of the trenches, but what does that mean?

[00:37:13] **Alexis Kron:** You know when you grow up with An environment where people are not very supportive and they are verbally and physically abusive and it is something you deal with for an extended period of time. Sometimes it's hard when you're an adult and you're standing on your own two feet to still not believe those things that were, you know, beaten into you as a child. So it's hard to, Adjust yourself to a more positive mindset and realize that, you know, you're good at something and that you can do it. So many people I think are faced with the adversity of a lot of people, you know, you can't, you can't, you can't, you can't, or you'll never make it. Or, A lot of things like that.

[00:37:55] So it was difficult for me to do, and I still deal with imposter syndrome where I don't feel like I am as good as I am with the things that I do.

[00:38:04] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like you hit a turning point at some point in adulthood? Where,

[00:38:12] **Alexis Kron:** definitely, yeah.

[00:38:14] **David Crabill:** What was that point?

[00:38:15] **Alexis Kron:** I think it was like having my own children, like having that come full circle and making some definite realizations. My mom and I don't speak, we don't have a relationship. It's not because I don't love her. It's just because she's not, she's never changed. So for me, when that came full circle, I realized these are my children.

[00:38:36] I could never do the things that were done to me. And it just, at that point, was like a turning point for me to want to be a better person all around.

[00:38:44] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like you had a positive role model in your life that allowed you to see something else and become the person you are today?

[00:38:54] **Alexis Kron:** Not growing up, but an adult, yeah, there's been, there's definitely been some people in my life that have, you know, showed me better or been more of a positive role model or just a better support system.

[00:39:09] **David Crabill:** I just ask that because it's common for people just to repeat whatever they were taught, right? And so I'm trying to understand like, what brought you out of repeating it over again?

[00:39:22] **Alexis Kron:** Honestly, like, growing up, I always knew I was different. It's crazy when people say that because it sounds really cliché, but I really am the black sheep. I don't, just don't have the same mindset or the same thought process, you know what I mean? And I kind of always knew I was just not, not like that.

[00:39:42] So as an adult, having your own freedom to make the choice to not be like that, it's actually a really hard choice because you don't want to be like that, but you have to train your mind. To not be like that anymore.

[00:39:56] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like your business or entrepreneurship has helped in that regard in terms of you? You know, I don't know, embracing more of a positive mindset.

[00:40:07] **Alexis Kron:** Absolutely, 100%. Because you have to be, you have to be aware of the way you treat people. Your tone of voice, your body language, the way you treat everything, you know, people want genuine. They don't want you to portray yourselves as a certain type of person just to appease your business. They want to know that that's really how you live your life, and it's unfortunate, but when you put yourself out in the public's eye like that, am I gonna go buy something from somebody who is rude, or like, boisterously voicing opinions on things people don't publicly speak about? Or am I gonna go buy my stuff from somebody who is respectful?

[00:40:46] Humble, kind, generous, honest, you know what I mean? Like it's just a certain way, you know, that you conduct yourself and you have to be genuine about it or people are, they're going to see right through it.

[00:40:57] **David Crabill:** Well, It's impressive to see where you came from and now like what you've built as an entrepreneur. And I know you, do offer a lot of advice on social media for other entrepreneurs. So for someone who is starting their business journey, what would you recommend?

[00:41:15] **Alexis Kron:** The best thing or the best piece of advice I can give them is to find something that people don't offer in your area and offer that. The baking world is extremely oversaturated in a lot of places. Find something you're good at and perfect that craft and just enjoy the process and the journey because it will tear you down at times.

[00:41:40] It definitely will, but for the times that it tears you down there's a lot of reward behind that as well. It's not an easy journey, but you know, like they say, Rome wasn't built in a day, so you just have to go through the motions.

[00:41:55] **David Crabill:** You said you live in a very small town, so you're able to identify some niche that wasn't tapped into. What about somebody who maybe lives in a more populated area? And they feel like there are no open gaps. What would you say to someone like that?

[00:42:13] **Alexis Kron:** Everybody has a target audience. No matter where you live, whether there's 5, 000 people or 500, 000 people, everybody has a target audience. You just have to be confident and find that target audience. It's really hard in the beginning. A good piece of advice is in the first year, you're not going to make any profit and you're probably going to lose a lot of money because you're going to be wanting to get your name out there.

[00:42:39] And the best way to do that is free samples. One of the things that really helped me Was making up corporate boxes, so cookies or muffins or things that people like to eat in the morning or during meetings, attaching all your information and introducing yourself. If your product is good, And people try it and they like it and they can't get it anywhere else and they want more, they're gonna contact you

[00:43:06] Even if it's subpar, you know, you went out there and marketed yourself. You're only gonna get better if you keep going. You have to keep going and never give up.

[00:43:16] **David Crabill:** So in terms of doing giveaways in the beginning of your business, how often did you do that on a weekly basis?

[00:43:24] **Alexis Kron:** I would probably say I gave stuff away almost every day the first six or seven months. Uh, It wasn't in overabundance, but if I had stuff that didn't sell and then I tried to sell it at a discounted rate and it still didn't sell I would either add stuff on to an order that was already made, just to kind of give my customer an incentive or a thank you, or, neighbors colleagues, if you, a lot of people will still work a regular 9 to 5 and, you know, start their baking journey.

[00:43:55] So I feel like a really good way to get your name out there is to bake things and take them to work. It's a lot of trial and error when you're first learning and starting out, so you're gonna take some losses, unfortunately, and a lot of Larger corporations or businesses will tell you, you know, the first year, a lot of people barely break even.

[00:44:16] So I wouldn't let that discourage you.

[00:44:19] **David Crabill:** How long do you think it took you to go from maybe losing money or barely breaking even to starting to make a good profit with your business?

[00:44:30] **Alexis Kron:** I would say that I've only been making a good profit in the last six months. And I've been doing this for almost six years.

[00:44:39] **David Crabill:** If you weren't making as good of a profit, were you still making a profit for many of those years? Or do you feel like you were just not making any money at all?

[00:44:48] **Alexis Kron:** I feel like I was making a very small profit. A lot of it was being funneled back into the business. When you are the sole proprietor and nobody is providing supplies or anything like that, things are expensive. So you'll spend a good portion of your profits in the first couple of years building up your Supplies as far as your mixers or your pots and pans or shelving or storage or, you know, there's a ton of components that go into a home bakery or any business.

[00:45:24] So you're, you're going to be spending a lot of your profit in the first You know, a couple of years building up the supplies that you need to be more profitable.

[00:45:32] **David Crabill:** Now you said that you were working a job at a hair salon before this. So that was income coming into your family, and then It sounds like that income went away when you started pursuing this business,

since it wasn't very profitable. Did you have to change your lifestyle to accommodate this goal and this journey?

[00:45:54] **Alexis Kron:** Definitely. the Older you get, you realize a lot of things are just for aesthetics. You know what I mean? You get to a point in your life where you just want to be happy and you want to be comfortable. So, Changing that portion of my life. It was hard then. But the older I've gotten, the easier it's become.

[00:46:14] And of course it's become easier to deal with when the profit is there. So there's not really a need for me to be as stressed out about it as I was prior to this.

[00:46:24] **David Crabill:** With you going for such a long time without making a whole lot of money, What allowed you to keep pursuing the business instead of just going out and getting another job?

[00:46:37] **Alexis Kron:** I had some health issues that pretty much make it hard for me to be able to work a regular nine to five full time. It was like one of those things where I was determined to make it happen. Uh, I don't believe in not being um, like in a partnership, when you're in a relationship with somebody and you have kids it's a very big burden to try to leave all of that on one person.

[00:47:00] So I'm just a determined person and I thought to myself, you know, Failure is not an option. I have to make it. And I think that is what has kept me so determined and motivated the whole time.

[00:47:12] **David Crabill:** Would you say that your shift from barely making it to actually becoming more profitable was A change of your pricing? Was it a change of the number of orders you were in? Did that shift occur?

[00:47:29] **Alexis Kron:** I think the shift started to occur in mindset. Once I started realizing that I actually can, and once I started breaking down, cost and Stuff like that. So it did get easier, but I definitely had to increase my prices and gain more regular clientele. So a lot of things that come along with building a business, you know, as you get better and as you go, longer and stay the course you'll attract the type of customers or clients that you want.

[00:48:00] It was really important for me to not water down my values for my business because. If I didn't keep going towards the goal or the type of people I wanted to attract to my business I think it would have burnt me out. You know,

[00:48:16] **David Crabill:** You mentioned the mindset in there, and I'm thinking about your history. Do you feel like your own personal history held you back in certain ways to being open to how successful your business could be?

[00:48:30] **Alexis Kron:** I think I held myself back . Sometimes as human beings, we're so overly critical of ourselves that we are in our own way without even realizing it. So I had to get out of my own way.

[00:48:43] **David Crabill:** And was there something that helped you get out of your own way? I mean, I'm just trying to understand how you made that shift, because I feel like a lot of people aren't even aware that they're in their own way.

[00:48:56] **Alexis Kron:** My kids, and then when your customer base starts growing and expanding and you're getting reviews left and right like, you know, this is the best cake I've ever had, or, when people start flooding you with positive feedback you can't deny yourself the right to feel like you've actually accomplished something.

[00:49:19] I think a lot of Americans, and people in general, they're not gonna lie. If they don't like it, they're going to tell you, Hey, that sucked or they're not going to come back and buy again. The goal is to obtain and retain customers. I don't have a ton of Oh, I only bought from you one time and I'll never be back customers.

[00:49:40] A lot of my customers are, I bought from you one time and now you're stuck with me for life because I'm not going anywhere with customers. And that, for me, is the goal. Like, it is a rewarding feeling. You have to get to that point, and I think my kids also help me get to that point. Um, If your kids constantly see or hear you, talking down about yourself, or, oh, I can't do it, or it's too hard, or it's not an achievable goal I think they feed off of that.

[00:50:09] Kids feed off their parents' energy. So it was huge for me once I had to make that mindset like, they're watching everything that I do. If I'm sitting here saying, oh, I suck, or this cake is this, or that, or, not giving praise to myself when I am working this hard, am I gonna create kids who think that overworking yourself is always the answer and you're still not satisfied?

[00:50:33] **David Crabill:** Now, how many kids do you have

[00:50:35] **Alexis Kron:** I have three.

[00:50:37] My oldest is nine, and I have a set of five year old twins. They're all girls. So I think it's very important for them to have a vision of, I can do anything. It's achievable and it's attainable, and even if I'm not working a nine to five job like, limits they can go to, there's no limit,

[00:50:58] **David Crabill:** So they're still pretty young. And I have a five year old boy. He just started kindergarten and I know that they consume a lot more time when they're younger. So are you looking ahead, like now that your kids are maybe in school, like you'll have more time to dedicate to the business.

[00:51:17] **Alexis Kron:** definitely. So the twins finally started full time school this year. Everybody is now in school full time, which has definitely freed up some more time for me. It makes it a little bit easier for me to get more done. So I feel like that definitely helps. My oldest is pretty helpful. The nine year old, she's pretty helpful with the twins.

[00:51:38] So when they were home during summer you know, she played with them a lot. We have a river out here and that's where everybody goes for the summer. They went to the river with their friends a lot. They want to get into it. They ask me all the time if they can learn or if I can teach them.

[00:51:54] So it's definitely on the horizon for them as well.

[00:51:57] **David Crabill:** So you now feel like you're in a place where you're profitable. Where do you see yourself going in the future? Like what's on your horizon?

[00:52:08] **Alexis Kron:** Honestly, it's hard to say. Bounced a lot of ideas off of my significant other, you know. One week I want to open a brick and mortar and the next week I want to do a dessert truck that kind of has The feeling of an ice cream truck, but desserts, not just ice cream. I'm in that place where I guess I'm enjoying the journey right now, I'm not quite sure what I want to do as far as expanding or, you know, brick and mortar or anything like that.

[00:52:37] I don't know. Sometimes I think about just keeping it a cottage bakery because I get to control every aspect of it .

[00:52:44] **David Crabill:** What would be the downsides or the challenges to keeping it a cottage bakery?

[00:52:51] **Alexis Kron:** One of the big ones is the room. Having room or a commercial oven in my home is, I think, roughly 1, 200 square feet, so my

kitchen's not very big. I had to buy um, a couple of tables for the days that it gets really busy, like camping tables that I can fold out for extra space. So that's definitely one of the biggest challenges is having the space and storage and an extra oven or an extra refrigerator. It's hard to expand, I guess you could say.

[00:53:23] **David Crabill:** Are there things you've learned with having a small kitchen that allows you to optimize or make your work more efficient?

[00:53:32] **Alexis Kron:** I would say for anybody who's got a small kitchen or a small workspace, getting covers that go over your sinks and over your oven or stovetop, they create a large amount of space. Get some type of shelving and buy your packaging in bulk because they send them all flattened. So you don't really have to have a ton of space for your packaging.

[00:53:56] **David Crabill:** And so, as you're considering these commercial routes, when do you think you will be ready to explore those options?

[00:54:07] **Alexis Kron:** I don't know, it's hard to say, you know what I mean? Like a year goes by really fast, I can't even believe we're already almost in September. Um. It's hard to say. I would love to expand maybe in the next year or so. But it's hard to say where the journey is going to take you. Things change so much.

[00:54:26] It's really hard to just put my thumb on a certain thing.

[00:54:29] **David Crabill:** Well, Why don't you feel ready right now to make that jump?

[00:54:34] **Alexis Kron:** I think it's more fear. And I just got to a point where I am profiting and I feel comfortable. So I think that I'm just, I'm just not ready for that amount of stress. My kids are still fairly small and I think I'm scared more than anything.

[00:54:51] **David Crabill:** If you knew you couldn't fail, where would you like the business to be in three to five years?

[00:54:58] **Alexis Kron:** I guess my ultimate dream would be to have a brick and mortar, a bakery. That offers things that people can't get everywhere else. You know, we don't have any standalone walk-in bakery um, in the city that I live in, like surrounding areas, maybe, you know, 50 miles away. Yes. But where I live, we don't have that. It would be really awesome to be able to have, like, a brick and mortar bakery that people could walk into, that have open cases

where they can see. We don't even have, like, a hometown donut shop, really, anymore. I think we have one but the hours are really weird, so there's just not a lot of options for people.

[00:55:41] **David Crabill:** As you think back on your journey, are there any moments or stories that stand out to you?

[00:55:47] **Alexis Kron:** guess the things that just make me feel like an emotional part of the journey, you know, when I first started I would tell my significant other like, I want to be, it's kind of silly too, but you know, I want to be the neighborhood cake lady. I want somebody to be like, hey, that's the cake lady right there, or you know, I want to be able to post a sale and sell out in two hours, or you know, I want to be able to look at my calendar and see that I'm booked every single day.

[00:56:15] And it has finally, you know, gotten to that point and that's emotional for me because when you manifest something or talk about, you know, your goals and stuff, when you get to that point where you have reached such a large milestone that you that you wanted so bad, it's really emotional.

[00:56:32] It makes you feel like tears of joy, you know what I mean?

[00:56:36] **David Crabill:** Now that you're at that place where you're profitable, you're successful, what do you feel like are your current challenges?

[00:56:44] **Alexis Kron:** Sometimes I feel like I get a little too ahead of myself, like I'm enthusiastic, so. If I know that like Let's just say the next major holiday that's big for me because I also do like assorted themed boxes is Halloween. So I'm already thinking about what I'm gonna be offering for Halloween when I still have, you know, we're not even in September yet.

[00:57:10] So I do tend to get a little ahead of myself or a little overwhelmed. Or I have a bad habit of taking on quite a bit of orders and burning myself out at the end of the week, but I really love what I do. I'm extremely passionate about it, I love it, and I probably wouldn't have it any other way.

[00:57:29] **David Crabill:** Well, awesome. Well, Thank you so much for coming on the show and your journey is a fascinating one and I'm definitely looking forward to seeing where you go in the future. Now, if someone would like to learn more about your business, where can they find you or how can they reach out?

[00:57:48] **Alexis Kron:** My main advertisement and stuff is basically my Instagram page, which is @bakednaz. I do have a Facebook page. You can find me under Alexis Kron, but you're probably going to find the most valuable content here on Instagram.

[00:58:05] **David Crabill:** Great. Well, I'll put links to those in the show notes, and thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today.

[00:58:13] **Alexis Kron:** Awesome, you have a great day, thank you for having me.

[00:58:17] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager podcast.

[00:58:23] For more information about this episode, go to [forrager.com/podcast/122](http://forrager.com/podcast/122).

[00:58:29] And if you're enjoying this podcast, please take a quick moment right now and leave me a review on Apple Podcasts. It doesn't have to be a long review, but it's truly the best way to support this show and will help others like you find this podcast.

[00:58:44] 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](http://cottagefoodcourse.com).

[00:58:58] Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.