

# Steph Uittenbogaard with Fifi's Patisseries

**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 Steph Uittenbogaard

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

[00:00:19] A lot of entrepreneurs still think they need to spend money to get a good website, and that is simply not true anymore. I'm a really big fan of Square Online. That's what I use for my fudge businesses 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] 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). All right, so I have Steph on the show today. She lives in Loveland, Colorado and sells macarons with her cottage food business, Fifi's Patisseries. Steph never thought that she would run her own baking business, especially one focused on macarons. After her first attempt at making macarons, she never thought she would make them again.

[00:01:17] But even when she eventually got the hang of making macarons, she never thought to sell them. As an introvert, the idea of selling her baked goods to strangers was quite intimidating. But with her husband's encouragement, she took the plunge and started her business. As you'll see, Steph's business trajectory has been quite different than most, and in this episode, she shares both the triumphs and challenges that she's faced along the way. And with that, let's jump right in.

[00:01:45] Welcome to the show, Steph. Nice to have you here.

[00:01:49] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Thanks. It's good to be here.

[00:01:52] **David Crabill:** Well, Steph, can you take me back to the beginning of this journey? How did it all get started?

[00:01:58] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** So I would say it was back in 2020. I actually received a Christmas gift from my mom. It was a really big cordon bleu pastry book. In that book, there's just, I mean, there's a ton of information for baking pastries, treats, desserts, like all these different things that I have never really seen.

[00:02:21] And the reason she got it for me is because I've always loved baking. So I was super excited to get this just wealth of information. And it really opened my eyes to the fact that there's a lot more out there that I really wasn't aware of as far as different treats and stuff that you could make. So I started going through it.

[00:02:41] And uh, I was baking through different recipes. And I came across macarons, which is um, I've heard of macarons at that point, but I never actually thought to bake them. They were just something I saw on TV that looked cool in those baking shows. So I decided to try making macarons and this is what my business kind of started off.

[00:03:04] But it took a little bit before I got to that point with macarons. The first time I made them, it was pretty much a disaster. My husband is gluten free and so he wanted me to make them first of all, but. They are a very difficult cookie to make, there's a lot of things that can go wrong when you're baking a macaron.

[00:03:26] So the first time I made them, it didn't go so well, and I kind of just dropped it. It was a little disappointing. usually when I bake stuff they turn out. So this was a little disheartening and I just left it as is and made different other things like entremets, pavlovas eclairs, stuff like that.

[00:03:47] I kind of did that. For probably about a year, I would just make different desserts and such for my family and friends. But my husband came back to me again and he was like, can you please make those macarons again? So I said, sure. And, uh, I kind of did a little more research on them. I didn't like the recipe that I had.

[00:04:06] Originally, so I did some more research, found that there are actually three different ways that you can make macarons. So that was interesting. So I ended up trying what's called the Italian method of making macarons, and that actually worked. A lot better than the first time I did it. That was exciting for me personally, because it was like, Hey, I did this.

[00:04:29] And then I had everybody try them and everybody was like, wow, these are really good. Like, What kind of cookie is this? And I said, Oh, they're macarons. Like. They're definitely unique, you don't see, and I, I hadn't really heard of macarons being sold in the marketplace markets around town and anything like that yet, so they were kind of new to myself and my friends and family at that point in time, so after just that initial success, of the macarons, it became like this goal of mine to really get this recipe figured out.

[00:05:04] Like, I want to learn how to make macarons. Like, As a baker and my passion for baking, this was a goal that I wanted to have, be able to successfully make macarons, like, all the time. So, I started really going to town and making Macarons, all different ways. I tried the different methods and there were a lot of errors along the way.

[00:05:27] probably about like six months of trial and error. They would explode, they would fall flat like a pancake, they just, they were giving me fits. So, I did more research and I actually discovered that part of living in high altitude in Colorado there's different ways of having to bake and I haven't really had to do that much with just regular baking like cookies and breads and stuff like that.

[00:05:53] But I figured out that the boiling point of liquids is actually different in high altitude and part of making the Italian version of uh, macarons. You actually boil your sugar with water. So you have to heat up water with your sugar and you kind of make it like a syrup and then you start pouring it into your meringue.

[00:06:17] So, that whole kind of chemical reaction with living in high altitude, once I figured out the ratios of sugar to water, I really started to see how to make my macarons turn out consistently. So once I had that down, I actually had my macarons baked correctly, time and time after again. And I just kept Making different flavors with different options. And I was just giving them to my friends and family because I wanted to just keep making macarons because it was so much fun for me. And my husband was like, why don't you sell these? Like, You really have a passion for making these.

[00:06:56] Why don't you go ahead and look into maybe turning this into a business? So it was at that time I think it was, 2022. So about two years later after I just started this whole thing I looked into the process of how to start a business. And then I came across cottage food bakery laws in Colorado and just all of that information.

[00:07:21] And so, I went about that process. It was from there that I basically got all my ducks in a row and I started selling macarons at farmers markets. That's kind of the big in a nutshell of how I started doing what I'm doing with Fefe's.

[00:07:35] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I haven't made macarons personally, but I would say that most people that have made macarons would say that there's quite a learning curve to it, regardless of whether you live at a high altitude or not.

[00:07:47] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Yes.

[00:07:48] **David Crabill:** Now you got this book in 2020, the Le Cordon Bleu book, and we're learning to make French pastries, but did you have a background in baking before this?

[00:08:00] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** just for fun, I've always been a baker. I don't have a professional background. I actually, uh, went to college for accounting. So I have my accounting degree. I did tax returns for a little while and uh, bookkeeping and all of those number related items. So baking was kind of my hobby, if you will.

[00:08:22] And getting that cordon bleu pastry book really advanced my hobby and, uh, taught me a lot more techniques that there are in baking the basics that I was doing, like making a pie and stuff.

[00:08:34] **David Crabill:** You know, A lot of entrepreneurs really hate the bookkeeping side of a business. I guess that wasn't really an issue for you though.

[00:08:44] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** No, that was a large factor in whether or not I was going to start this business. I think it was definitely a benefit to me to really just jump in and do this because I am able to do my own bookkeeping, which is very beneficial and I understand the sales tax kind of laws and requirements for businesses in Colorado.

[00:09:11] So that was helpful also for me to just get going on this, my own business adventure. So yeah, definitely it was helpful and I can see how. Not having that background can kind of be a bit of a I wouldn't say a detriment to starting, but kind of it brings that hesitation. Yeah. I mean, That's one of the things about being an entrepreneur is you wear a lot of hats and some of those

hats aren't as fun. Now, what do you use it for? Doing your own accounting. Do you use a piece of software? Do you do it by hand?

[00:09:44] I use free bookkeeping software on the internet. It's called Wave, it provides all of the necessary requirements for basic bookkeeping. I am very efficient in QuickBooks, but I don't need the robustness of QuickBooks for my cottage food bakery business at home.

[00:10:06] So I found the free program Wave to be Perfect for my needs. And I would say it's, like somebody who does not have bookkeeping knowledge, I think WAVE is a good website that somebody who doesn't have that knowledge can pick up and use and get through their bookkeeping.

[00:10:25] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I've always used WAVE for my businesses, and I found it to be fantastic. I've never needed the power of QuickBooks, and QuickBooks is also pretty expensive, so definitely in full agreement there with the WAVE recommendation.

[00:10:42] So you picked up this cookbook and started to learn French pastry, and then I think it was maybe about. A year and a half period of time there before you actually started the business. So how long before you actually started the business, did you get the idea of selling these baked goods of yours and the macarons?

[00:11:05] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** I would say it was probably about six months before, so that would be about January, February I started thinking about making macarons to sell. I have an introverted personality. So that idea would have never crossed my mind to sell something that I make to people. It was my husband's. idea from the get go.

[00:11:31] he basically pushed me to do it because he said, I see how happy it makes you and it's true. It provides me stress relief. Baking is my stress reliever. Making something that I love and giving it to people that I love, friends and family, and then also turn around and give that to people I don't know and hopefully provide them a small sliver of joy in their day because they had a cookie

[00:11:59] that just opened up that whole different world of, this is exciting and something I want to do.

[00:12:04] **David Crabill:** Now you've mentioned that when you started learning about these in 2020, 2021, they are totally foreign to you. You hadn't

seen them in stores. I mean, I've definitely seen them a lot. In the last few years, macarons have become a very big thing out in California where I live, would you say that's true in Colorado too?

[00:12:26] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Yes. So I would say it was just that macarons were definitely starting to pick up speed. About that time that I started baking them from the beginning when I kind of got my cookbook. I wasn't personally looking for them, but I do know that a couple stores around in the area, they're not directly in Loveland, but they had opened up their own store because they were, they were more ahead of the game than I was. So they had started selling them and then I guessed it, I felt like a macaron. Era, if you will, really took off in the past few years and has just become very popular everywhere, especially at farmer's markets and such. More and more I think are, they're wanting to learn how to make macarons and they're selling them.

[00:13:14] So, Yeah, I definitely think it's become more popular within the past few years.

[00:13:18] **David Crabill:** Did you find when you started selling them that you had to do a lot of education with new customers about what they were?

[00:13:27] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Yes the biggest confusion that people have is they think that they are macaroons and that was also a bit of a challenge to overcome because macaroons are an acquired taste. They're the little cookies that are made basically just with coconut. A lot of people do not like coconut and so they saw that I was selling macarons but they did not understand that they were completely different from a macaroon, so they didn't even want to bother with stopping by.

[00:14:00] that was a bit of a challenge to overcome. It's just getting people to come up and be like, hey, have you ever had a macaron? It's different from a macaroon. You should try it. And most people would tell me, I completely thought that this was a macaron with coconut and I don't like those, but these are amazing.

[00:14:16] So, That was interesting.

[00:14:18] **David Crabill:** Was there anything in particular that you did to try to overcome that?

[00:14:23]

[00:14:24] **David Crabill:** did you change your signage at your event, or, you know, were you a lot more vocal with people who were passing by?

[00:14:31] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** I didn't change my signage. my logo actually is an Eiffel Tower with Two macarons poked into the top of it. And my cookies are actually extremely colorful. I love doing vibrant colors with them. And they are very different looking than a macaroon and they're displayed so that people can see them.

[00:14:54] So, I didn't actually like to go out of my way to kind of tell people like, hey, this isn't a macaron because this is a different challenge that I've, that I faced at markets. The markets that I went to were usually in the mornings and not a lot of people really want to buy sweet treats early in the morning.

[00:15:13] So I didn't go out of my way to see if my customers understood that difference because I felt like the ones that were interested would come over and either talk to me and tell me, I don't like those or they would just tell me, what is that? So, I felt like the people who were really wanting, interested and wanted to try what I was selling.

[00:15:38] They came up to me and kind of asked questions if they didn't know what I had, or if they would say, I don't like those, sorry. And then I would say, are you thinking of a macaroon or a macaron? And then they'd be like, oh, there's a difference. So that was kind of how I went about that.

[00:15:56] **David Crabill:** Now, is your business solely focused on macarons?

[00:15:58] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** It was for about a year and a half, I would say. and I believe this is just from other macaron bakeries, I'm part of a group on Facebook. It's well known that due to the economy and inflation, macaron sales have kind of decreased for everybody. So I actually have been looking, working on at home. Test baking, making other pastries like croissants and uh, cruffins. I've been working on French brioche. So different breads that basically I can sell under the Colorado Cottage Food Blast because I do want to have a bigger variety of products for customers so it's not just macarons.

[00:16:47] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I would say there was kind of a fad of macarons for a little while there, and we're still in it. And I don't think that the interest in macarons will ever go away, but it was hyper inflated interest for a while there, and that's probably why you're seeing kind of a decrease, I'd imagine.

[00:17:08] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Yes.

[00:17:09] **David Crabill:** So when you started the markets, did you find that there was plenty of interest from people?

[00:17:16] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Yes, exactly. My first probably six months of markets, there was a lot of interest. I did really well. And then I would say last year, kind of late summer into fall the sales really started going down. And I ended up actually this year backing off. Doing markets because they weren't as profitable as I was wanting them to be.

[00:17:43] And that's why I looked into what other goods can I provide at markets? I did notice though, that my sales in just cold calls have picked up a lot though. People are more interested in having macarons for their parties. So I would say if I get back to, into the farmer's market scene I would definitely be coming with some more products um,

[00:18:08] **David Crabill:** This drop in interest in macarons is correlated with something that I wanted to ask you about, because as I was going through your social media page, I noticed that, the posts that you got the most interest on were from like, a couple years ago, and you haven't had as much interest from your posts anymore.

[00:18:28] So I mean, would you agree with that, that you saw a lot more responsiveness to your posts about macarons in the beginning?

[00:18:35] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Yes, that was kind of an interesting phenomenon. When I first created my Fifi's Patisseries page, I posted a lot of different bakes that I had, macarons and such, and it was definitely just this surge of. People that began to follow me and they all were liking my macarons that I was posting, my other desserts that I was posting, and then I'm not sure if this is just the Instagram algorithm at work, but the further along I went with my posts, The less viewership I guess I got and the less likes.

[00:19:12] And I don't know if that is due to the fact that macarons are just declining in popularity and other things are taking place. I mean, in my own viewership of the pastry baking world, there's definitely seasons where this baked good is super popular right now and then it will be this baked good that is super popular.

[00:19:31] Like for a while there it was extreme. I did a couple entries but those were surging in popularity on Instagram. And then, yeah, you had the macarons



and right now it's sugar cookies. I've noticed there's a lot of frosted sugar cookies that are super popular right now in the video realm, reels and stuff like that.

[00:19:51] So there's definitely waves of what it goes through on uh social media, with the

[00:19:59] **David Crabill:** fact that you've seen this kind of drop off with macarons to some degree, have you started to try to focus your efforts on like a new trend at all or, tried to compensate for it that way.

[00:20:11] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** I haven't specifically looked into, following a different trend just because trends do switch over to another trend. And I have found macarons really fit well into my busy schedule. I have three kids under 13 that obviously keep me very busy. the timing of how you make them that just really works with my schedule of having them at home and with school and all that.

[00:20:41] So that's why I'm looking into making croissants and muffins and breads and just kind of that realm of different farmer's markets. I'm kind of at a good place right now with my business that I'm not looking at at the moment to grow it substantially just because I do have younger kids and I want to keep my schedule the way it is for the time being.

[00:21:06] So, The orders that I still get every couple of weeks are for the macarons that have been really working for me. So, my plan is to just go with the flow. What I'm doing right now and yeah,

[00:21:20] **David Crabill:** So when you say that the macarons work into your schedule, how does the process of making macarons differ from other baked goods? Like, why is it particularly good for you as a mother of three?

[00:21:34] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** I can make about a batch of macarons, which is like 30. I can usually get those done within about two hours from start to finish. And one of the nice things about macarons is you can freeze them once you're done. So I can make them when I have that segment of time when my kids are at school.

[00:21:55] I can get those cookies done, put them in the freezer for when they're going to get picked up. And continue about my day. Other items I know, like sugar cookies, like they're very time consuming as far as just the extensivity of

the frosting process and the decorations. You have to let it dry for a long time and then continue on your next steps.

[00:22:16] Now, I am not, by no means, I am not. very knowledgeable about how all of that goes, but I know that it's more time consuming than macarons. So, That's not something I would want to do myself.

[00:22:29] **David Crabill:** You said that you're only getting like, about one order every two weeks,

[00:22:35] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Yes.

[00:22:36] **David Crabill:** so, has that also slowed down the number of custom orders that you're getting for macarons?

[00:22:43] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** No. So, Since I have actually gotten my business up into the Google business. Realm my orders for macarons have actually increased. Whereas before I was literally only doing farmers markets I never really got personal orders because they would just come to the farmers market, pick up, A couple macarons and that would be it.

[00:23:10] Whereas now that I have it in Google I have been getting a lot more larger orders. Those orders can be anywhere from two dozen macarons up to like 300 macarons. So kind of having that every other week kind of order is, it works really well for me.

[00:23:29] **David Crabill:** Who's typically ordering from you? Are they just people that are having parties, or are you getting like corporate orders?

[00:23:37] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** right now, it's just people who are having parties of any nature, birthday parties, anniversary parties, bachelorette parties, all those different kinds of parties, people will, that's, they're ordering macarons for. In the holidays I do get um, corporate orders.

[00:23:54] So those ones are a lot bigger. But that's usually just around the holidays when they're looking for gifts and such.

[00:24:00] **David Crabill:** Now, the holidays seems like a good time to be, selling macarons, like you could see people wanting these as gifts, you know, they're kind of a higher priced item and they're definitely very giftable. Do you plan to go back to events during the holidays at the end of the year, or are you just not doing those for the time being?

[00:24:23] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** No, I do those are the markets I do like to go to. the events, craft shows that are over the holidays because people definitely they're looking for Holiday items to buy. And then I also really love to do more character macarons. So like, for Halloween time, I'll do spooky goblins, Frankenstein's winter season snowman, reindeer Santa Claus macarons.

[00:24:53] So, the holidays are definitely a fun time to sell macarons because you can really make them. different than just the plain one circle color. So people get really excited to get those just because they're so unique and different.

[00:25:08] **David Crabill:** Do you charge more for the ones that are custom decorated?

[00:25:13] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Yes, I do. They are definitely more time consuming. So, time is money. So definitely got to add your labor into the cost there for sure.

[00:25:23] **David Crabill:** What is your pricing looking like for, basic macaron, and then, You know, a more elaborate macaron that has multiple colors or a design added onto it.

[00:25:35] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** So my basic macaron price is \$2 each. So for example, if somebody wants to add a printed image to the top of their macaron, it's like an extra 35 cents. That extra 35 cents also can be applied if you want sprinkles added or chocolate dip or gold paint applied.

[00:26:01] If you get into character macarons. I don't know if you saw on my Instagram page, I did those Star Wars macarons. Those ones definitely go up in price. Those are about, depending on which one it is, they can be about 2. 75 to 3, just depending on their complexity and how many different colors. I use or what kind of application like, frosting applications I put on top.

[00:26:27] So I would say they can range anywhere from two to 3 and just depending.

[00:26:31] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I did see the Star Wars macarons on your page, and I also saw, probably the largest macaron I've ever seen, which was the Millennium Falcon from Star Wars. Can you just talk about what went into that?

[00:26:49] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** For sure. So my family's kind of always been a fan of Star Wars. We love watching movies and it was May the 4th. Was

coming up and I was just like, I really want to just do something totally out of the box. What can I make out of a macaron that is Star Wars related and just something that's never been done before.

[00:27:13] So I came up with the millennial Falcon and it was just like, It took me a long time, and I didn't actually sell it, it was just for my family to enjoy, but it was really cool just creating the templates for all of the pieces, and then basically drawing on them and coloring, and It definitely is a lot of fun for me to make basically like a macaron cake, if you will.

[00:27:39] I've done like a big cactus for my daughter's birthday. That one turned out really fun. I know most times you just see the macaron, like a big six inch macaron circle kind of stacked on top of each other. But, you could do like a bluey macaron cake if you wanted to.

[00:27:54] You just need all the colors and a template and those kinds of things are fun. Those kinds of orders don't really come in for me. I don't know, macaron cakes aren't that popular in the sense of making a character cake. Most people want to have, you know, Cake, cake. so those kinds of applications I just do for fun.

[00:28:13] **David Crabill:** With making such a large macaron, is there a lot of trial and error, or are there certain things that you need to do to allow it to bake properly?

[00:28:24] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Yes. The time to bake is different. It takes a lot longer and you have to be careful because. They can have a tendency to be undercooked or be overcooked really quickly. When you're doing something that has absolutely no recipe behind it, you're basically just, You're opening the oven and figuring out, is this actually done or not?

[00:28:48] Because you really have nothing to go off of, other than just experience and knowing what it looks like. And with macarons, you have what's called the jiggle test. You kind of like, touch the top of the macaron and wiggle it a little bit, and if it's completely set, you're probably done. If it's still wiggly, you don't want to take it out.

[00:29:08] So yeah, there's just trial and error with anything that doesn't have a recipe to back it up. So that's kind of the fun part about baking that I like is coming up with things that don't have a recipe, haven't really been created before and just figuring it out yourself because I love coming up with different flavor combinations.

[00:29:29] Just seeing what works and what doesn't. Putting together large macarons that you really shouldn't even see, but it's something cool to do and try, and if it works, awesome. If not, you just learn something for the next time to do it.

[00:29:45] **David Crabill:** Yeah, so you've experimented a lot with different types of macarons for fun. I also can see you've posted other French pastries that you've done for fun or for your family that you would not be able to sell under Colorado's cottage food law based on the restrictions. Have you ever felt limited? Buy the restrictions that Colorado gives you.

[00:30:09] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** In some aspects, yes. I would love to be able to sell my entire cream puffs eclairs, basically everything that has a cream in it that requires refrigeration, that would be wonderful to sell. I completely understand that you can't because there has to be restrictions on things, which is why someday.

[00:30:32] If everything works out, I would love to start my own kind of little French pastry bakery and be able to sell those different items because you really don't see things like entremets in the marketplace and eclairs and pavlovas. Just those different items they're more on the specialty side, and, if I could make those for people someday, that would be great.

[00:30:56] But yeah, Colorado there's, good restrictions. I think Colorado is probably on the higher end of restrictions compared to other states. I'm not really sure specifically on that though, but I have heard. That it's more difficult to sell here than other states. Maybe you're probably more aware of that than I am.

[00:31:12] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I wouldn't say worse. I just say Colorado's different in certain ways than other states. But one way that Colorado is more restrictive is they don't allow any cream or butter in frostings, right? So, No buttercreams of any kind are allowed, which is very frustrating to most bakers. Is that a restriction you're adhering to, or are you just turning a blind eye to that?

[00:31:41] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** I actually don't use buttercream. So my frosting that I put in my macarons is cottage food okay. most macarons are filled with regular buttercream and we can't use buttercream, so that's why I call it frosting because it's not, it doesn't have any butter in it.

[00:32:00] It's uh, made with oil based products. So, I do abide by that.

[00:32:06] **David Crabill:** This is a question that I get a lot of. With people frustrated about their cottage food law not allowing butter, not allowing cream.

[00:32:16] So, you know, were there certain resources that you found particularly helpful in finding recipes that worked well?

[00:32:24] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** So basically the big box stores, they obviously have their own bakeries. I know Walmart even has some. And you can actually get their bakery frostings, and their bakery frostings are not made with butter. At least the ones that I get mine from. and that's what is kind of fun about making macarons is the different flavors that you can use.

[00:32:52] So what I do personally is I just take that base frosting and I buy freeze dried powders for fruit. Because if I want a strawberry macaron, you can't use that. Like you can't make your own jelly and put that in there. You also don't necessarily want to use jellies when you're doing macarons unless you do it properly because it can make your macarons soggy, but that's on a different note.

[00:33:17] Anyways I like to flavor the frosting in whatever application I can. So there's extracts, like, There's all kinds of different flavors of extracts that you can get. You can use the freeze dried powders that I like to do. One of my goals is to try to make my macarons gluten free.

[00:33:35] So like, for example, cookies and cream. Most people think, well that's got to have Oreos in it of some shape or form, because that's what cookies and cream is usually made out of. Well, I take my frosting and I like to add black cocoa powder to it, and vanilla extract and stuff like that. So it gives you the sense that you're eating an Oreo, but you're not, there's actually no Oreo products in it.

[00:34:00] It also helps me with my labeling, because if you add an Oreo, you have to put all of the ingredients in an Oreo in it. It helps me keep my labeling simpler, and also keep my cookies naturally gluten free. Black cocoa powder is what they use to make Oreos.

[00:34:16] That's kind of my little cheat for cookies and cream, but um, Just different things like that. I work around to make my cookies in line with Colorado's cottage food laws.

[00:34:27] I know that I am using a bit of a cheat, I guess, in using a store made frosting that a bakery uses.

[00:34:35] there is a stigma in the baking world to using things like, box cake mixes and frostings and Stuff that you haven't made personally.

[00:34:47] But, I haven't had anybody complain. So they always have good reviews. so it must be going okay.

[00:34:56] **David Crabill:** I feel Like people newer to the cottage food community think there's a problem with using box mixes, but I've been in this space long enough to know that It's extremely common for people to use box mixes and there's nothing wrong with using box mixes. copyright issues. And It's a very practical solution for a lot of people who have to deal with this.

[00:35:22] You know, there's not a ton of states that prevent you from using buttercream, but there are a number of them, and it's frustrating because obviously buttercream isn't really that bad. Hazardous in any way, shape or form, in my opinion, but

[00:35:35] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Yes. No, I agree.

[00:35:36] **David Crabill:** I honestly think it's fantastic because people ask me that a lot, and I, what I usually tell people is, you can look into vegan recipes. I had never thought about, you know Just going and buying, you know, Walmart's frosting frostings. Now, have you ever tried to make your own frostings that don't contain butter or cream?

[00:36:02] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** I have once and the problem is the frosting ended up being very oily and this was because you're supposed to buy high ratio shortening when compared to Just your basic Crisco shortening. So I'm not sure what the difference is, but I tried using regular shortening, Crisco shortening, to make my own frosting.

[00:36:27] And I had to add way too much powdered sugar to get the consistency correct and to have it not be kind of that oily taste in the back of your mouth. And it was way too sweet. And I know a lot of complaints come in for macarons because they're too sweet. And I've noticed in The way that I make my macarons my customers always tell me I really enjoy your macarons because they're not so sweet.

[00:36:55] And I think that's just in part because I use less sugar in my macaron shell, but then the frosting that I use is also not as sweet. incredibly sweet. And I know when you make buttercreams and stuff like that, there's a lot of powdered sugar that gets put into those frostings. So I think that kind of plays a big part in

my macarons and why people enjoy them is because they're not incredibly sweet.

[00:37:20] **David Crabill:** So, Since you haven't really gotten any complaints if, say, Colorado were to someday allow buttercreams like many states do, do you think you would switch? Over to using a more standard buttercream at that point.

[00:37:36] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** I actually wouldn't personally use buttercream. I would actually use a ganache. But ganaches are also not stable because you have the addition of cream. So that's also why I don't use ganache, but if that were ever to open up, I would make my own ganaches because with ganaches, you can create a wide variety of ganache flavors to go with your macarons.

[00:38:01] so yes I wouldn't make buttercream myself. I find buttercream to be way too sweet. And since macarons are already as sweet as it is, adding that buttercream to me is too much. So, A ganache, yes.

[00:38:13] **David Crabill:** Do you even find a Swiss meringue buttercream to be too sweet?

[00:38:19] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** I have found that those buttercreams are definitely on the less sweet end compared to Americans. So, I would definitely take those into consideration. If I was given the option, I would definitely put that in my to do list of trying in addition to the ganache.

[00:38:37] **David Crabill:** Now, you had said earlier that with pricing, you charge an extra 35 cents if you print something onto the macaron. So, How are you printing onto a macaron?

[00:38:50] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** I have a little edible printer. I have not gotten the famous Eddie. printer yet, which I would love to do those are quite expensive though so, need to sell some more macarons before I get one of those, but I have a little handheld printer that I bought some edible ink in and basically you can upload just about anything into it just print on a single cookie, just one at a time.

[00:39:17] **David Crabill:** And what's that printer that you have?

[00:39:22] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** the actual box it comes in, the brand is called Congton, Dalmay is the company I technically bought it from.



[00:39:30] **David Crabill:** So, Over the last couple years, you've done quite a lot of custom orders. What has been one of your favorites?

[00:39:38] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** the custom order that I made. For the corporate order that I had. That was just really fun putting all of those boxes together, putting on their logo. That's actually the biggest order I have ever had. So that was a lot of fun for me.

[00:39:58] **David Crabill:** How many macarons did you make for that order?

[00:40:02] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** A Thousand. I believe.

[00:40:05] **David Crabill:** Was it just macarons, or were there other things?

[00:40:10] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Nope, it was just macarons. I really don't sell too many other things in an order other than macarons right now. Macarons are basically just, that's what I make and sell currently. Hopefully it'll be other things, items in the near future, but I don't know if those will necessarily sell on personal orders.

[00:40:31] they're probably just more market based goods.

[00:40:33] **David Crabill:** Now I can see on your social media that you've done things like assortment boxes. Of various things in the past is that something that you still do for holidays?

[00:40:45] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Yes, I usually only make assortment boxes if they are ordered. It's a bit difficult to do the assortment boxes if I don't have an order because if I do, I won't sell them all. I'm kind of left with a lot of macarons hanging out in my freezer.

[00:41:05] A minimum order is 30 macarons. So if I did an assortment box, I would want to make sure that I had, for sure, like 30 people or 15, depending on how many are in a box, but just a good amount of people that are actually going to buy them. I don't typically just offer assortment boxes without knowing that I'm going to have sales on them just because I'm not that large as a company yet or substantiated, if you will, that I know that if I offer this, I'm going to have them all sold.

[00:41:37] So I have to put the marketing out of time before I sell. would do something like that for the holidays.

[00:41:44] **David Crabill:** Now, when you have sold at markets or events, how are you typically selling your macarons? Are you selling them in one dozen sets? Are you selling them individually? What have you found works best?

[00:41:58] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** I have found that selling them in individually packaged bags works the best for me. I make mini macarons. So I'll make three or four flavors in mini size. They're about the size of Between a nickel and a dime, I would say.

[00:42:18] packaging four flavors of the mini macarons in a bag. Selling those are quite popular. I think it's due to the fact that people get a lot of flavor variety in one package without buying a single macaron. They get more flavor variety for their dollar. So, I sell them individually or I sell them in bags of mini macarons.

[00:42:40] **David Crabill:** And how much is a bag of four mini macarons?

[00:42:46] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** With four flavors of mini macarons in a bag I usually do 12. So there's three of each flavor. The smaller ones go for six. The bigger bags will be about 8 to 9 if I add another one or two of each flavor. It just depends on how many I can fit in a bag, but it's usually six or eight dollars.

[00:43:06] **David Crabill:** Now, do you do something different during the holidays when you know people are looking to buy gifts? Do you have, like, gift centric products?

[00:43:17] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** I do not at this time unless I get a custom order for someone who wants to put together a gift box. I did uh, with a friend of mine who sells cakes and cupcakes. She and I made a Mother's Day gift box. So if I did do something, it would probably be along those lines with another cottage food bakery of mine.

[00:43:41] That way there's a variety of items, not just macarons for a Christmas gift.

[00:43:47] **David Crabill:** I'm just thinking about how your business has slowed down, and I know you said that that's okay with how busy your life is currently. Where is your business today compared to where you expected it to be, maybe a year or two ago as you were looking ahead? Has the business moved forward in a different way than you expected?

[00:44:10] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Yeah, so originally when I was starting my business, I really just planned to do farmers markets and sell it, sell it, just individual macarons and get my name out there in that way. It's definitely changed because I found that sales at markets went down. And so I looked into other ways of marketing, which is why I added my Google page and my business has turned more into custom orders of the macaron towers and just. Larger orders in general. And I wasn't really expecting it to go that way. I thought I would just go to markets and that's how I would remain selling. So I am enjoying being able to have more custom orders come in that I can sell those. A couple every month as opposed to going to markets. I do enjoy going to markets, but it's a lot of work.

[00:45:09] Myself putting up my tent and my table and everything each Saturday. Right now in my season of life, that's not it. I actually am thankful for what my business has turned into because it works a lot better for me right now. Just having these custom orders come in every couple weeks. But I still do sign up for the bigger holiday markets.

[00:45:32] They're just fun going to those and seeing the same people that you know that have been at other markets and catching up and meeting more people and having them learn what macarons are. So, Yeah, it's definitely changed and it's changed for the better for me. so it's been a good two years.

[00:45:50] **David Crabill:** So would you recommend at this point someone start a macaron business, if they were thinking about it.

[00:45:58] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** I think they really need to look at their area and do some research. Before I started selling, I actually went to quite a few farmers markets myself just to see if anybody was selling macarons. If anybody else was selling cookies just so I could see if the market was already saturated. I do know that the market just in Colorado in general, everywhere, there's more and more macaron bakers that keep starting businesses.

[00:46:27] So If you have a passion for making macarons and it's something you want to do then by all means, fulfill that passion and make macarons for people. Just be aware of the climate that you're selling in and just the different areas that you can sell to. Honestly, if you can add something else to your repertoire at the time when you begin selling macarons, another baked good, it just gives you a bigger clientele to reach and just gives you more opportunity to sell more in your business if you have that option.

[00:47:05] Looking back, that's probably something I would have like to do myself is just have something else in addition to macarons that falls under the cottage food bakery limits that I could sell along with them just to open up my doors to more people for more sales and just have that area be a little larger than limited to just macarons.

[00:47:27] **David Crabill:** Now, as you've added things like the cruffins to your menu, have you noticed that people are receptive to them or? Are you just fixed because you're known as the macaron person?

[00:47:41] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** No, as I've added, cruffins to a couple markets I did earlier this year and I had a lot of people stopping by saying, what is a cruffin? And when I tell them they're definitely wanting to try it. Just from the couple markets that I had them at, they were definitely received well and a lot of customers wanted to try something that wasn't necessarily super sweet or a cookie.

[00:48:06] So I think. That's what I'm working on is selling croissants and selling cinnamon rolls, brioche cinnamon rolls maybe just having different options that are more for kind of the early morning time frame will help my customer stop by my table at a market because I have other options than just cookies.

[00:48:29] **David Crabill:** What type of person do you think a cottage food business would be good for?

[00:48:35] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Anybody that is looking to be able to run a business from their home kitchen, and is looking for flexibility in being able to have a job, but also if you have a different job, if you're looking to kind of start something else in baking that you love, or canning I know there's a lot of different realms out there.

[00:48:59] For cottage food business that isn't just baking. So I think it's good for anybody that wants to have flexibility of being able to do something out of their house. It's really nice being able to run a business from home and being able to not have to go to and from a store front I don't have the time for.

[00:49:17] I mean, it's also. Cost efficient because owning your own brick and mortar is expensive. getting yourself established as a cottage food business before you get to that step, I think that's a great way to start.

[00:49:30] **David Crabill:** You had mentioned that because you're introverted, this is something you would never have done without your husband pushing you towards it. What do you feel like it's added to your life?

[00:49:42] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** It's given me confidence, to be more outgoing and friendly with people whereas as an introverted myself, I don't necessarily go out of my way to talk to people but it's helped me grow a lot to want to go out and talk to people and not even necessarily when I'm, when I'm macarons at a market or something, I actually And more apt to just be personable with strangers and so having my macaron business has definitely helped me in that aspect of being introverted,

[00:50:15] **David Crabill:** As you look forward, I know you're happy with where the business is now, where would you like it to be in, say, one year?

[00:50:25] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** In one year I would love to be able to make macarons every week. Having custom orders come in every week. I would love to be able to do larger orders for people. I don't necessarily see myself in the market arena more than I am currently. I would like to see myself having more custom orders coming in for birthdays and. Just any parties, really.

[00:50:54] **David Crabill:** And you'd mentioned earlier that, You would love at some point, to own your own brick and mortar French pastry shop. When do you feel like you'll be ready for that?

[00:51:05] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** My youngest is currently seven so, maybe in the next 10 years, that would be a good timing for myself. My kiddos are a lot older than at that point and have a little more savings, put in for the business and also just give myself that much more time for my own R& D and creating my own pastries.

[00:51:29] 10 years would be good. We'll see.

[00:51:33] **David Crabill:** What do you feel is driving you towards that goal? Like, why do you want to expand this concept?

[00:51:43] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Due to the restrictions that obviously you have as a cottage food bakery business I'm not making everything that I would love to be able to make. I'd love coming up with different concepts for entremets because they're just, They can, they're so unique and they don't really exist around here.

[00:52:04] I would love to be able to sell entremets and I can only do that if I have my own brick and mortar and my own, like an actual food retail license set up. Just to be able to offer the different kinds of products that I love to make. for people to enjoy is the main reason why I would like to someday have my own and also just be able to provide a workspace for young bakers or whoever likes to bake to give them an opportunity to bake something that they might not have ever really heard of or would get to bake and bake normally without going to a fancy pastry school.

[00:52:46] So I know I don't have any. fancy expertise from going to a pastry school, but if you put in the hard work and you love baking, you can come up with your own way of making those fancy desserts and don't necessarily have to have the degree, I think, behind that to be able to do that.

[00:53:07] Because I've proven to myself that I can make those things without having to have gone to school for it, so. Well, thank you so much

[00:53:16] **David Crabill:** for coming on and sharing your journey with us. Now, if someone would like to learn more about you, where can they find you? Or how can they reach out?

[00:53:26] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** The best way to find me is to just google Fifi's Patisseries. that will kind of pull up my website. It will pull up my Instagram, my Facebook or you can also email me at [fifibakes@outlook.com](mailto:fifibakes@outlook.com) if you have any questions that way too.

[00:53:43] **David Crabill:** Well, I'll put links to all those in the show notes and thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today.

[00:53:51] **Steph Uittenbogaard:** Thank you for having me. I really enjoyed it.

[00:53:54] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager Podcast.

[00:54:01] For more information about this episode, go to [forrager.com/podcast/124](http://forrager.com/podcast/124).

[00:54:08] And if you enjoyed this episode, please head over to Apple Podcasts right now and leave me a review. It's truly the best way to support the show and will help others like you find this podcast.

[00:54:18] 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).

[00:54:31] Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.