

Nicole DiMarco with All About The Freeze

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 Nicole DiMarco. But first, ConvertKit recently made a pretty big announcement that has great news for cottage food entrepreneurs.

[00:00:18] If you've listened to the show for a while, you know that I'm a big fan of using ConvertKit to build an email marketing list. ConvertKit has always had a great free tier for their platform, but now it is even better. Now you can use ConvertKit for free for up to 10,000 email subscribers, plus they will allow you to use one automation sequence for free as well.

[00:00:39] Now if that doesn't mean much to you right now, trust me when I say that it is by far the best free email marketing option that I have ever seen. So if you still haven't hopped on the email marketing bandwagon, now is a great time to do so. To get started and learn more, you can watch my free email marketing tutorial at forrager.com/email. All right so I have Nicole on the show today. She lives in West Deptford, New Jersey, and sells freeze dried candy with her cottage food business, All About the Freeze. Nicole's entry point into the cottage food world was quite different than most. Many entrepreneurs convert a long time hobby into a business.

[00:01:21] But Nicole decided to start a freeze dried candy business before she had any experience making freeze dried candy. However, Nicole did have quite a lot of experience in sales, retail, and social media, and those skills have helped her build a very successful cottage food business in less than one year. And with that, let's jump right into this episode. Welcome to the show, Nicole. Nice to have you here.

[00:01:50] **Nicole DiMarco:** Hi, thank you so much for having me.

[00:01:52] **David Crabill:** Well, Nicole, can you tell me how your business got started?

[00:01:56] **Nicole DiMarco:** Yeah, so we were looking for a business to start and I was scrolling through TikTok and it kept popping up for me about freeze dried candy. You know, After about a week of that happening, I went ahead and

did a search. I was like, let me just see how much a freeze dryer is Just to get an idea of that.

[00:02:13] And when I took a look at it, it was, you know, they're a little pricey. So then after that, I did a search in my area. I was like, is anybody else doing this? Because I had never seen it before. I've never tried it before. I'd never even heard of it before TikTok. So when I did the search, I saw my area, the closest thing was about 98 miles away in New York at that point.

[00:02:30] Then I brought it to my husband and I said, Hey, I think this might be a cool thing for us to start. And that's kind of how it was all born.

[00:02:38] **David Crabill:** So that's pretty interesting. This is very different than I'd say most of the guests that I have on the show. They've usually been making things for a long time. In this case, you were. Trying to find something to sell and what caused you to seek out a food business?

[00:02:58] **Nicole DiMarco:** It kind of goes back a little bit. So I actually had an Etsy shop. At one point I did all of the sublimation and the stuff, you know, making wreaths and all the vinyl stuff, all the typical stuff you'd find at craft shows. I always did that stuff on the side of my main job, which was always retail management.

[00:03:14] And I did that for years. I did. I managed a store where we did engraving. I love that. I love the creative aspect of that. Then I left that job and I actually began managing a chocolate shop, which is a well known chocolate shop. And I loved that job. My absolute favorite job in the world that I've ever had.

[00:03:31] Then unfortunately my store closed down. The day the store closed down, my mom also passed away. So one day, I suddenly didn't have a job. And then I also lost my mom. She had been battling cancer. And what I realized in that moment was that my life changed in an instant. And. I had always worked for corporations.

[00:03:50] I had always done what you're supposed to do. You go to work, you clock in, you clock out. I didn't want to do that anymore. I had lost so much time in my life by doing that. So I wanted a job that gave me, you know, obviously the financial stability that I needed, but also the freedom of my time. So that was what kind of started the whole Let me see what I can find to do.

[00:04:12] And in the meantime that is when everything had started on the other end of the social media, all that had started. So I was able to stay home for quite a while and work on that kind of stuff. And then eventually it got to the point where I was like, okay, you really need to find something. So that's the trail that led me to where I am right now.

[00:04:28] **David Crabill:** You mentioned the other end of social media. We talked about that before hopping on the interview here, but can you just describe a little bit about your background of what you did before

[00:04:40] **Nicole DiMarco:** So for the social media end of it, it actually started as a, you know, a joke, a dare between my husband and the kids. They dared my husband like, dad, you can't get more followers than us. Like, you know, they're teenagers. This was, you know, right around when everything with COVID was kind of like just starting to kind of calm down. And you know, he's like, all right, you know, whatever he's, you know, made a couple of videos here and there and a couple have gone viral. And when he did that, we were like, we're in our forties.

[00:05:05] This is, this is wild. And all of a sudden people were, you know, identifying with us and relating to us. And that's kind of how that all started. We found out like, we would just put these videos up and just have fun making them and people would love them. And they would, you know, we've, the views were going wild and all these things were happening and we were like, this is crazy.

[00:05:23] And that's kind of how it happened. It just was a joke from our kids, a dare from our kids. And it kind of led us to that. But what we found was we would brighten people's days by making these videos, by putting out the content. And we would notice the same people commenting. So we started, like some of the people that started watching us in the beginning, we still talk to them now.

[00:05:41] We've even met, one or two in person and occasionally, rarely. You know, People will meet people, they'll come out to where we're at in vending with the business, they'll come out and meet us over there. So that's kind of how that was all born.

[00:05:52] **David Crabill:** Yeah, so you have this whole comedy channel, and that is actually a pretty successful channel. I know you've got a lot of accounts, but I saw your husband's Facebook account has over 220, 000 followers, so it's pretty big. And when did you start that whole process?

[00:06:11] **Nicole DiMarco:** We started that, I'm going to say it was in 2021, around April, May of 2021. It was after, uh, I, I wasn't working at the time. So I had already, everything had already happened with my job at that point. And yeah, it just kinda, it started then it actually started with TikTok with him posting on TikTok, and then he actually didn't start posting on Facebook until about October of 2021.

[00:06:37] And that was when Facebook had started this whole new program and they were doing all these different things and they were basically just introducing their Reels program. So he's like, should I start posting on there? And I'm like, why not see what happens. And it happened again. What happened on TikTok happened again on Facebook, but on a bigger scale.

[00:06:53] So it was just, it's still wild to us. Like it's been a couple of years now, but it's still wild to us when people, they watch the videos and we put something out and they like, they, the whole process it's, it's a little surreal sometimes when I'm like this, you know, that exists, that 221, 000 people, Chose to follow us on, that one platform.

[00:07:10] And they're like, oh my God, if we don't post in a couple days, they're like, where have you been? We haven't seen you guys. That kind of thing. It's such a wild place especially, like I said, we're in our forties, we're older, so it's been a wild experience there.

[00:07:22] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I watched a number of the videos, and you guys are very funny the way you interact, and both of you are creating those videos, you know, it's not just your husband that's doing it, of course. and so you both had this pretty strong sense of humor and it's led to this following. Did you, at one point, or even still today like, have an ambition to have that become a full time business generating income for you guys?

[00:07:47] **Nicole DiMarco:** So it did generate quite a bit of income for us at the beginning. And then some things changed as social media tends to. So we still earn a little bit from it, but not nearly what we were at one point. So it's really more or less, we're doing it now more or less just for fun, more than anything.

[00:08:04] It's not really a financial stability for us in any way, shape, or form now at this point.

[00:08:08] **David Crabill:** That is one of the downsides of relying on social media, is it often changes, and often not in a good way

[00:08:17] so, This eventually led you to seek out a different kind of business. You had a background in food from running a chocolate shop. So when did you really start to look for an idea of what to sell versus when you actually started the business?

[00:08:33] **Nicole DiMarco:** my shop closed down in February of 2021. And then my mom, like I said, passed at that same point. So I'm going to say probably around April, May of that year was where I was like, okay. Late. This is my chance because I never would have left an established job to start a business.

[00:08:54] That I would never have done. I would have started the business while I had the job in tandem. And then, if it got to the point where I was really successful, then I left the standard job. So that's kind of where I was at. I was like, I need something that creates that financial stability.

[00:09:07] So it was a couple of months in between when my, you know, when I had my job head. Ended versus when I started looking. Now, finding what I wanted to do took longer because we actually didn't start this until sometime, by the time we had all of our permits and everything in place to be able to sell was September of 2023, even though we started the process in June of 2023.

[00:09:27] **David Crabill:** So what do you feel like you've taken from all of your managerial experience that you brought into this food business?

[00:09:35] **Nicole DiMarco:** Everything, because the one thing I've learned is People are creatures of habit. So when I worked at certain stores, you know, I, my job was to teach other people how to sell or how, you know, how to interact with the customers and the clients. And as I did that, I was training myself in each area that I was in.

[00:09:55] I was like, how can I make myself better? The best salesperson, because at the end of the day, that's what a retail job is. I have to sell, I have to make numbers, but in doing that, how can I make sure the customer is getting what they want? So I learned that for me, the best way is just by talking to people.

[00:10:11] I would just go up to them, talk to them, engage with them. And that's it. I took that process into my next job, which was, you know, the chocolate job. And the difference between the two things there was, when people would walk into the chocolate shop, it was like magic. They would walk in and they would see the tables and all the colors and all the chocolate.

[00:10:31] And a store was a rarity. Like they weren't available in every single state. A lot of people didn't even know it existed. So when people would walk in, they truly had, it was their first time knowing that this place existed. Taking everything that I learned with just talking with people and engaging with people and watching how people reacted to certain situations and then tailoring how I interacted with them to give them the best experience.

[00:10:54] That's something that I carried over into my own business because the product I sell now at this point, we're a year in, it's a little more, more common. Like you can see it at grocery stores now versus when I first started, people were seeing it on TikTok. They weren't seeing it anywhere else. That was the part with me, like people would walk up and be like, what is this?

[00:11:11] Like, what do you have here? And then I was explaining it. So and again, I got that thing. I was like, okay, I'm absorbing the information that people are saying to me, how they're speaking to me, what they're asking me in the questions. And I learned when I was first interacting with people to make sure of my dialogue.

[00:11:26] Was a way where I can explain it so simply, because you know, when you start talking about all the technical things, you lose people. So how, I was like, how can I explain this in a way that's clear, engaging, and get them excited about what I have in my stand when there's so many other stands they could choose from.

[00:11:41] So all of that in baby steps, has all come over to create everything that I do for the business now. Even marketing, branding, how I set up everything. It's all from all the years of experience. It's all come over.

[00:11:54] **David Crabill:** it's interesting that you didn't really see freeze dried candy anywhere just a year ago or so. And. I mean, I know that that trend has been pretty active for, I'd say, two to three years, but probably more focused on the Midwest. So I wonder if it's just, like, expanding outward to other states, and it's just hitting your state like, now.

[00:12:15] **Nicole DiMarco:** So we're in New Jersey, we're about 20 minutes outside of Philadelphia. And I'm amazed still, like I said, we're a year into this. Are there other people near me that do freeze dried candy? Yes, but there's not a lot. And you're right where he said the Midwest, a very saturated market. But where I'm at, not quite yet. It's still relatively new. You know, I can count maybe about 10 people that I personally either have seen or have talked to or know that also make freeze dried candy in this area.

[00:12:43] So it's still relatively new. for this area.

[00:12:46] **David Crabill:** I'm curious, you were looking for a product to sell, and you landed on this freeze dried candy idea. What were some other things you were seriously considering doing?

[00:12:58] **Nicole DiMarco:** So I had left the chocolate shop, I moved into sublimation, which is, I don't know if you've ever heard of that, but it's basically taken, you print out images and then you heat transfer them onto different items. And that was really taken over. Laser engraving. That was another thing that I was, I talked to myself multiple times out of buying a laser engraver.

[00:13:19] That was a big one. And then after that it was, you know, I was like, Oh, I'm going to make t-shirts and design my own clothing line. And that's like the direction I went. It was just the creative end of it. And then the problem was there's so many people already doing that. So that was kind of, my thing, I was like, I want something that nobody's really doing.

[00:13:38] If it's something, I want to be able to be kind of like the first, the pioneer of it. And obviously I'm not the pioneer of freeze dried candy. But in my area, when I started, it's still relatively new. So I was able to kind of get in first, one of the early ones in this area on it. And that's something that I was really excited about.

[00:13:56] Because when people came to me, like I said, They didn't know, they had no idea what I was selling. They had no idea what freeze dried candy is; they would relate it to astronaut candy. That's what they were related to. And that was a great segue because I feel like almost everybody had the freeze dried ice cream when they were a kid.

[00:14:11] So that was a great bouncing point to be able to say like, well, Hey, this is what I do.

[00:14:16] **David Crabill:** So you clearly, we're not just focused on starting a food business. It's just sort of circumstantial that that's what you landed on, and I know you focus on freeze dried candy. Why did you decide to go that route instead of focusing on other freeze dried items as well?

[00:14:33] **Nicole DiMarco:** So this is kind of a two part answer. So when we originally started, on TikTok, what I was seeing was frozen dried candy. So when we went out, we bought our freeze dryer and we brought everything back

home and then we're like, okay, now we've got to get this legal. Like how do we set this up so we can sell?

[00:14:50] That's kind of what puts us in the candy pigeonhole because in the state of New Jersey under the cottage law, you're, we're pretty severely limited. So I actually didn't get approved to freeze dry fruits or vegetables. It's a pretty extensive list of what you can and cannot do. And unfortunately like the fruits and vegetables just didn't fall into that.

[00:15:08] But here's the thing that we really want. So we're at the baby stages right now. We're still setting up, you know, at the festivals and the fairs, we have a pretty huge concept for the expansion of our business that involves a lot of other items that I don't see other freeze dried people doing currently.

[00:15:24] So that's kind of where we're at. We're, we need to get to that next step. So we've been looking for the commercial kitchen to go commercial, to be able to expand upon what we started under cottage law, but that's why we are. Right now a freeze dried candy company.

[00:15:37] **David Crabill:** Now, you eventually decided to go forward with this idea of freezing dried candy and made the investment into the freeze dryer, which is a significant investment. Which one did you choose, and how much did it cost?

[00:15:52] **Nicole DiMarco:** We went with a harvest rate. And then we actually got lucky. We didn't realize at the time that they were switching over the model to bring out a new one. So we actually got ours for under 3, 000. So we got very lucky in that regard. Now we're at the point though, where we are getting ready to add on more machines to our production because we need to.

[00:16:13] And, um, we are exploring a few other ones. There's a blue alpine, there's one called the cube. There's other options out there, but we've been very fortunate with our harvest rate. We really haven't had any issues with it. Nothing that we haven't been able to fix or, you know, we had one problem crop up and we actually, someone we met through vending they were actually able to help us and fix a part that's a thousand dollars.

[00:16:34] They were actually able to fix it for us and get it running again. So we've been very fortunate.

[00:16:38] **David Crabill:** Harvest right, I would say, is the leader in space, and which size did you get?

[00:16:46] **Nicole DiMarco:** We have a medium.

[00:16:50] **David Crabill:** Yeah, so I, you mentioned that people would walk into the chocolate shop and just be amazed. And when you said that, it reminded me of seeing the picture. When you first opened, I saw one of your earliest Facebook posts for your candy business was the booth setup, and it was very impressive for a first time festival or event.

[00:17:13] So I would assume you took it. Aspects of what you learned from your chocolate shop and put that into when you started the market.

[00:17:22] **Nicole DiMarco:** We, it was actually funny. Our first market, everything happened in such a weird way because when we, you know, we started in June, we actually didn't get our permit until mid September. So by that point we were kind of locked out of a lot of the fall shows cause the applications already had to be in, which was something we didn't know at that point.

[00:17:41] So, by the time we got our permit and our first show, we only had about a three week window. We actually, and like I said I, I had, you know, had, all the grandeur dreams of having a business at some point. So everything that you see in that initial picture, except for the banner, was pretty much stuff we had in our garage that we kind of pulled together to create that display.

[00:18:00] I basically went out there and I was like, all right, I've got a ton of stuff out here. I, you know, I love it. All the different craft stores. I was like, let's pull this out. Let's set some tables up in our yard. Let's figure it out. How are we going to make this happen? And that was how that display came together.

[00:18:13] But I'm always mindful of displays of everything I learned. Even the engraving stores are probably where most of my visual concepts come from, because we had so many products there and, you know, being able to showcase them and make them exciting for all the people coming in for all the different occasions they were shopping for.

[00:18:30] I put all that into that first display. But then after that, what I did was my next event, it was a rainy day. we didn't, we weren't doing much business. So I was like, you know what, we're going to network. So I walked around the whole entire show and I looked at everybody's booth and I focused on all the different details, the colors.

[00:18:47] And I was like, what am I drawn to? What's making me walk into this booth? And then that was kind of how I was able to evolve my booth

display, as you can see. So if you've been on the page, you can see our booth display has evolved very much since that initial setup. And that was how it kind of came to be just by observing what other people were doing and seeing what I was drawn to, what I saw people going for.

[00:19:06] And that was How we all pulled it together.

[00:19:08] **David Crabill:** So when you started it you definitely started it by doing an in person event, right? Like this festival.

[00:19:16] **Nicole DiMarco:** So what we did was we actually launched on Facebook first. We just did a local launch, you know, through the town talk page. And we just said, Hey, this is what we're doing. we picked a day where, like, anybody wants a place in order, this is what we have. Just message us.

[00:19:28] And we just did a local meetup. And then about three weeks later was our first event.

[00:19:32] **David Crabill:** Considering that you had a lot of social media experience prior to this? Did you ever consider just doing Facebook only or online only and trying to make that work?

[00:19:46] **Nicole DiMarco:** So that was the initial plan. So the one thing I would say is make sure you do your research. So when we, you know, obviously we had seen a TikTok shop, we saw people doing their lives and I was like, that's right in our wheelhouse. We were doing live shows on our social media channel, you know, almost every single night at one point.

[00:20:02] So I was like, I'm very comfortable with that. Well, under cottage law, you're very restricted. So we're actually not allowed to sell online. We can sell online, but we can only ship within New Jersey. We're not allowed to ship out of state. We're not allowed to set up out of state. It's a lot more involved with that.

[00:20:20] And with TikTok, specifically to be in the TikTok shop, you have to have a commercial kitchen. You can't even be under cottage law and sell from, So we didn't realize all that. So that was like, I was like, Oh my God, I was like, we have this, we do have this social media following and we weren't actually able to utilize any of it.

[00:20:37] So we had, you know, the Facebook page that you see was actually my old crafting page. And I think I had maybe like 1500 followers on that. We

changed that over to the, the, all about the freeze. I kind of put it up as a little teaser. I switched it to the name a few months before we actually announced what we were doing.

[00:20:54] We didn't tell anybody really what we were doing at that point. you know, we were like, okay, I guess we're building this from the ground up. So yes, I would've loved to be able to, we have people that are waiting for us to be able to ship. Now, even a year later, they'll still be with us and they'll say, Hey, you know, can you ship yet?

[00:21:08] And unfortunately the answer is no, which is the only reason why we don't access that. We're not allowed.

[00:21:13] **David Crabill:** Well, I noticed that you have a lot of social accounts in between TikTok and Instagram and Facebook, the comedy channel, you have one for weight loss. You have a lot going on and I was just wondering, like, how do you manage it all? Because it's, it seems like a lot. You've got YouTube and it's just, it's a little bit hard for me to even understand how you make the time for it all.

[00:21:41] **Nicole DiMarco:** It is a lot. And you'll notice if you are a follower of all the pages, you'll notice that I don't always post, like sometimes you might see a gap and when I'm posting on certain things, and that means because I am focusing on something else. So with the candy business, I try to post on there daily, but when I'm like, I kind of usually have Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, where I'm not at events or doing anything.

[00:22:02] So I'm a little quieter on those days, but then as we're getting closer to the events, when I have You know, saying like, Hey, this is where we're going to be. Come stop out. You'll see me a little more active on those pages. And then in the beginning of the week, I'll be a little more active on the other social media pages.

[00:22:16] So it's, there is a lot going on and you can see, I was definitely more active on certain things prior to starting the business for sure. The business is kind of my baby right now, so that is where most of my attention goes. But I know that people like weight loss stuff. I know they like being inspired by everything with that.

[00:22:33] And then I know my husband and I's relationship, like I said, that's the thing with that. Like people really identify with that and I know that that brings people smiles. So I like to make sure I give that attention too.

[00:22:43] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I mean, you have this channel where it's your husband and your relationship, as you said, and it's very funny, and yet it feels like the candy business is much more formal, much more businesslike. I don't see a whole lot of humor in that. Would you agree with that? That you don't bring a lot of the humor over into your business?

[00:23:05] **Nicole DiMarco:** sneakily. Yes. That was kind of intentional because the comedy page is, All over the place. Like we play pranks on each other and do all kinds of things. And there's a lot of different topics and stuff like that. But some people actually get a little turned off by that kind of thing. but you'll see like there was a post a few, I think, I'm gonna say probably about six weeks ago now, but we put it up there and he had his leg wrapped around the pole of the tent.

[00:23:32] And we talked about him. I was like, this is how I get on with my business. We put the eye candy right out front. So we did that. So we do tie it in a little bit, but it is that fine medium. Cause I don't want people to. be turned off by the comedy end of it if they're not, you know, and I want people to respect us as a business as well.

[00:23:47] So it is that fine line where we're trying to figure out how we can kind of merge a little bit more, but you were right in your assessment. We haven't really brought a whole lot of it over yet.

[00:23:55] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like you put that into your in person events? Like, when you both are out there, is there a lot of joking around? Or uh, shenanigans? As I think your

[00:24:08] **Nicole DiMarco:** Yeah, definitely. It's funny. I say like now we've made a lot of vendor friends and we end up at a lot of events with the same people and they see us like what you guys see in the videos and stuff like that. Like they see it in person, because my husband, I really, we've been together for 24 years.

[00:24:24] We really are a back and forth couple. We are very sarcastic. We both are, what you're seeing in the videos, like are some of them skits? Yeah, absolutely. But our personalities are pretty much what you're seeing on there. You know, Whenever we're setting up, I always say things like my husband and I cannot work together.

[00:24:40] It's a well documented thing, like if he's working on a project. So when we're setting up, we're, you know, back and forth at each other the whole

entire time. So I'm like people around us for the first time, they're probably like, what is going on? And then with it, like after we're done setting up and then, you know, they're hearing us back and forth, they're laughing and they're like, Oh my God, you guys are so funny.

[00:24:57] So yeah, definitely when we're out there in person and stuff like that, people definitely see how we are.

[00:25:02] **David Crabill:** Now with the Facebook page for the candy business, I noticed you post way more on your Facebook page than you do on Instagram. Why don't you tie the two together? And cross post.

[00:25:16] **Nicole DiMarco:** So I need to, I actually do need to post more on Instagram and TikTok, but I do make it more product based versus putting me in front of the camera to make those videos happen. But what I have found is if I take my post on Facebook and automatically send it over to Instagram, it doesn't move on Instagram.

[00:25:35] So I have to go in there and create the post again and then post it on Instagram, which we've noticed that even from my husband's pages too. Whenever you do that cross posting, it actually, for some reason they don't move. So that's just what it is. And Instagram hasn't been a focus for me, but it definitely should be because so many people are on Instagram.

[00:25:52] **David Crabill:** That's very interesting that the automatic cross posting you found doesn't work. I've never tested it myself but it kind of makes sense, I guess, because, you know, maybe they're not going to push redundant content. Now I saw a recent post from you that talked about fighting the algorithm. What have you learned about these algorithms?

[00:26:16] **Nicole DiMarco:** I've learned a lot, like all of the backdoor information that Facebook gives you and insights and all that stuff. They do give you a lot of information to work with, which is great. But what I can tell you is if you're gonna start a page. You have to post consistently. So when we say we fell out of the algorithm, if we don't post for two days, we've fallen out of the algorithm.

[00:26:36] So you'll notice that we have to post consistently for a certain amount of days for me to start to see our posts getting likes and comments and reactions. And then say, if I take a post from one page and share it over to one of my other pages, which I do sometimes, they never move as well as if I had just posted, like I said, the whole new post.

[00:26:57] And create that for some reason we noticed that for years, like it, if we share a post, it just doesn't go. We have to go back in and we have to totally create a whole new post. So yeah.

[00:27:07] **David Crabill:** So you post consistently, and what does that mean for you?

[00:27:12] **Nicole DiMarco:** So for me, that would mean like during the day I post like three to five times a day. that would be considered consistent. Now, if you don't do that, that's when you find that your posts aren't gonna move. Like if you just are like, okay, I'm going to post one time a day. Your posts aren't gonna move if you have to be consistently in the algorithm.

[00:27:30] And the other thing is people have to interact with it. So it's not, I don't think people realize like people always are like, Oh, I see what she's working on, but they don't react or respond to the post in any way shape or form.

[00:27:40] Bye. that what happens is when you go past people, they stop showing up in your feed for you. And then if you're following, say if you start following a bunch of new people, the people that you were seeing before, you don't see them as much because you, I'm sure you notice on your own Facebook, you may be like, Oh, I haven't seen this person in a while.

[00:27:56] And you go and you look and you're like, Oh, they've been posting, but it hasn't been showing up for me. If you're not interacting with the posts, they stop showing up. And that's what happens. So, And then if you're not posting as often, there's less opportunities for people to engage with you. So all of that starts to work against you.

[00:28:10] At least that's what we found allegedly. I don't know if that's what it really is, but that's what we've noticed from our experience.

[00:28:16] **David Crabill:** So three to five times a day is a lot, and it might be a bit overwhelming for a new entrepreneur. How do you find things to post three to five times a day?

[00:28:29] **Nicole DiMarco:** so it's easy on the candy page for the most part because you know, I have my schedule I have to put out. I know when I'm working on new things or if I go to restock, I can snap a quick picture of that. The one thing people will say, everything is content. Just when you're out and

when you're doing things and you're just working on your things, just stop and pull out the camera every once in a while.

[00:28:50] Like just, even if you just start with just taking pictures and then a couple short videos, you can always go into, like I use CapCut as my video editor and I'll do that and I'll pull together a bunch of different things and I'll create a video out of it. So you might see one video pulled together, but I might've taken two weeks of a couple different clips here and there and pulled it together.

[00:29:08] So just in the back of mind, you want to think like, okay, like everything is content. What am I doing today? Like people love to see like a day in the life of, or the processes of how something starts to how it ends. And I think sometimes people are even surprised. Like, I draw inspiration from everything.

[00:29:23] So I could be in a store, just the regular grocery store and go down an aisle. I might see one thing, like say a box of cereal, and I make a whole idea for a product and I'm like, oh, and I do a quick search. I'm like, is anybody doing this yet? Freeze dried? And I'm like, okay, good. No, nobody's doing it. And then I grab the things and I go home and I make it.

[00:29:39] And then I'll take pictures and I'll be like, okay, this is something I'm working on this week. So it's really just thinking everything you're doing can be content and taking the pictures or even in your notepad on your phone or whatever you use, just kind of jotting down notes like, okay, I did this today or this is an idea or this could be a post idea.

[00:29:57] It's just kind of having something to refer back to because I have in my, for our other pages, I just randomly snap pictures all the time. And when I snap the pictures, I just file them. And I'm like, okay, when I find a funny quote or a funny saying to attach with it, then I'll post that picture.

[00:30:13] So you have to be mindful of it. Like if you want to do it, you have to do it. And that's the biggest thing with it. You have to do it. You have to be consistent if you want it to grow.

[00:30:20] **David Crabill:** Do you ever feel overwhelmed by trying to keep up with it or do you find it pretty easy just to create that content?

[00:30:29] **Nicole DiMarco:** Now I find it pretty easy. When we're making videos and stuff like that, that's a little bit harder because we have to find the

time to make the video. And then sometimes it's a one take and sometimes a video, a clip that you're seeing for 30 seconds might've taken us an hour and a half to make. So those videos are actually what takes me the longest.

[00:30:50] If I'm doing something more like a skit. Now if I'm just doing business and stuff like that, it's just become natural. Sometimes I'll be packing up and I'll be like, Oh, I didn't take a picture of this. So then it's like, all right, I have to remember next time to take a picture.

[00:31:02] So it can be overwhelming. Yes. But I think once you get in the groove of it, I think it just becomes second nature.

[00:31:07] **David Crabill:** Now are you scheduling out these posts well in advance?

[00:31:11] **Nicole DiMarco:** Yes and no. Most of the time. No. Most of the time you're seeing a post that I took that same day or that morning. Every once in a while I might plan out my week and I'm like, okay, I know like on Thursday, I know I want to talk about a new product drop and I might be thinking about that over the weekend prior, but typically now I've found in my life, I definitely fly better when I don't super plan everything because then I stress myself out when things don't work to the plan.

[00:31:37] So I found I work a little better off the cuff, but some people are planners and that planning might be what they need to do.

[00:31:42] **David Crabill:** Have you noticed any difference between how well a post will perform when you schedule it versus when you post it real time?

[00:31:52] **Nicole DiMarco:** Yes, the scheduled posts don't do as well as the real time posts. Also, time of day matters. Like if you post really early in the morning, you're not going to get that interaction you need. So what I've heard, which I don't know if this is the truth, but I've heard that Facebook will show your, to your immediate people who typically follow you.

[00:32:11] I guess they would be considered like your top fans, right? And then if they don't interact with the post, the post doesn't go as well as it could. And I'll definitely see that because sometimes I'll refer back to a post and it might've been up for a few hours and it might've gotten like one reaction to it.

[00:32:25] Now, sometimes I just let it go. Then sometimes I might go into the comment section and you can do like, at commenters, at top fans, and then, or I

can just like at my own name. And sometimes I'll do that in the comments and I'll see if that post gets any more attention. But I also pay attention to those posts and I'm like, what content did I post?

[00:32:44] What time did I post it? Is that making a difference? Am I noticing a theme here of why that's not working? Pictures. People love pictures. They love videos. They like to see that stuff. So when you're doing posts with just words versus doing posts with pictures, there's a huge difference in the reactions you get on those two.

[00:33:00] **David Crabill:** Now, not on your candy pages, but I know you've had posts that go viral, that have had millions of views. Have you noticed anything that causes something to go viral? Anything special about those kinds of posts?

[00:33:16] **Nicole DiMarco:** My husband and I laugh about this all the time. As many times as posts on that page have gone viral. I still cannot tell you what makes a post go viral. Cause we'll sit there and we'll come up with an idea and we'll be like, yeah, this is great. Everybody's going to love it. We're going to see this go and it'll get a thousand views.

[00:33:32] And then we have a post where I randomly recorded my husband coming out of a store and he's like, just, you know, he's shaking his hips, gets 12, it has either 12 million or 14 million views. It was literally one of those split second decisions for me to turn on the camera. That went viral. There was a post we did when we went on vacation.

[00:33:50] we were at a little pond. Look, it wasn't a pond. It was a fountain thing in, um, In Myrtle beach. And people were reacting to something I said in the video, not actually the content of the video itself. And what they were reacting to, what I said wasn't even really what was happening in the video.

[00:34:07] That video went viral. So I wish I had the magic key. I tell people this all the time. I'm like, I wish I could tell you what you needed to go viral, but I still don't know. And I've had plenty of things go viral and I still can't tell you what makes it go viral.

[00:34:20] **David Crabill:** Yeah, so obviously getting new followers is great.

[00:34:25] Um, it looks like you've gotten About 4, 000 new followers over the past year since you started this candy business and yet, you know, for a business page like, it only really matters, right, if it translates to an increase of business.

Have you noticed a correlation between how your Facebook following has grown for your candy business page versus, like, how your business has grown?

[00:34:49] **Nicole DiMarco:** So that one, it's a, it's a little harder to answer when it comes to the number of followers on there. What I can tell you is we've had people that come out to our events because of our Facebook page. They see our posts. They see, there was actually a really popular food page in South Jersey. And I posted on this, And I think at that time, I think they maybe had a hundred thousand followers on this one page and that post got over 600 reactions. We got so much business from that post.

[00:35:22] And then we also got followers from that post. And people that met us at our first event. Follow us on our Facebook page and they still come to our events now. And we're talking about almost a year later. So I don't know if it's necessarily the number, right?

[00:35:36] If that matters. It's if that number correlates to people that are in your area and are interested in what you're doing, because you can have random people. I can have people following me from the UK, but they're not customers. They're just there, you know, watching along. They might've just seen my stuff pop up because I'm in, you know, I support other small businesses and stuff.

[00:35:54] So I'm always going on liking people's things. So the social media aspect is very important. If the people that are following you are people who could actually be customers,

[00:36:03] **David Crabill:** And you mentioned that you want to be better about posting on Instagram, posting on TikTok, although I think of those platforms as more national,

[00:36:14] Why would you put more focus into those at this point?

[00:36:17] **Nicole DiMarco:** So our goal is to have a commercial kitchen. So we've, right now we're at the point where we're kind of at, I almost call it like a stop because with the cottage law, you're limited by what we can sell, how much money we can make. But once we go commercial, a lot of those limits are gone. We don't have them anymore.

[00:36:35] So when we focus on the more national level, when we do get into a commercial space, we already have people who may have been watching us and they're like, okay, I see that they're going to be going this route. And they might be some of our first customers, right? And also I like to engage with other

people who are doing like what I'm doing, not necessarily freezing dried candy, but just other people that are running their own businesses, have their own thing going on.

[00:36:57] So I like to engage with them. So I want to see what they're doing and I'm hoping maybe they're checking out and seeing what I'm doing. And maybe I can, something I'm doing, maybe not necessarily, And what I'm doing is not necessarily like my freeze dried candy business, but what I'm doing for my freeze dried candy business might help inspire someone else to start their own business or be interested in it.

[00:37:15] So it's kind of a couple of reasons why I would like to focus a little bit more on that to have that kind of growth. Not necessarily, like I said, is it going to help me with sales right now? No. But is it something that'll just help grow my name and grow the brand? Yes.

[00:37:28] **David Crabill:** So, Obviously, the cottage food law in New Jersey comes with a number of restrictions, and Was there a point when you learned about those that you were like, Whoa, like maybe I don't want to do this at all. Maybe I want to do one of the craft things instead.

[00:37:44] **Nicole DiMarco:** This is something else my husband and I have talked about, like we realized that the TikTok shop wasn't going to be an option for us. that was almost instantly gut wrenching in that moment. Cause we were like, Oh, I was like, you know, cause that's what people are doing. Like they're going on there and they're doing it live.

[00:37:57] So we're like, all right, so how are we going to sell this? And then we're like, okay it's, through the Facebook page. It's through local, you know, the Facebook marketplaces. It's going to be set up at the farmers markets and all the different festivals. So once we learned where we were like, Oh like, what did we get ourselves into?

[00:38:12] Yeah. Because it is very, you have to follow a lot of rules and it's, it's hard. You know, it's a little daunting when you realize that. and the other thing is like, if you are someone who is thinking of starting a cottage food business in New Jersey, there's a lot of cottage food bakers already.

[00:38:26] There's a lot going on. So you, if you're going to come into that market, you need to find a way to set yourself apart from everybody else. You need to find a way. Why are people going to come buy your cookies and not

Susie's Bakery's cookies? of competition out there, especially where I'm at in New Jersey.

[00:38:42] I can see it all over. That's ultimately why we kind of stayed the path, even though we're limited because there's not a lot of people doing it yet.

[00:38:49] **David Crabill:** Well, You obviously have this vision that is a bigger vision than you were able to implement right off the bat, but then it changed and you were focusing on these markets, but you still obviously had a plan and a goal. How do you feel like the business has progressed compared to your expectations?

[00:39:08] **Nicole DiMarco:** So I will say when we first started, the fall season was great. Then as traditional retail tends to go, we got into like the spring and the summer, at the end of the day, we're outside, right? It's very rare for us to have an indoor event. Our business became very weather impacted.

[00:39:24] So for us to sign up for these events where, you know, thousands and thousands of people are coming, if it's really hot or raining, thousands of thousands of people are not coming. So that was our first kind of hurdle. We're like, okay, like we didn't really plan for that. So now we're going back into the fall season again.

[00:39:41] So spring and summer we've done okay. Have we fallen under expectations? Yes. But I think it's because We didn't know what we didn't know. We didn't know setting up in the summertime was going to be so weather based.

[00:39:53] And We've learned that, okay, like next year, our focus on what markets we're going to do is going to be in a different area.

[00:39:59] So, you know, We know what we're going to do again next year and what we're not going to do again next year, at least for that part of the year. But yeah, for this year, we're just kind of sticking out with what we committed to.

[00:40:07] **David Crabill:** Now when you say these spring summer events aren't working as well what do you consider to be like a good sales day versus maybe a poor sales day?

[00:40:18] **Nicole DiMarco:** For us, basically, it kind of comes down to how many people we have to the booth, right? I have an idea of what would be considered a good sales day for us. For the smaller markets and stuff like that, if

we hit like a \$500 day, that's good. I'll take it. But at the fairs and the festivals we're talking significantly higher.

[00:40:39] So each event's going to be different because I base it on the amount of traffic that should be coming through and we kind of guess it on that. But then, like I said, the weather plays into that. That totally changes the whole entire ballgame.

[00:40:50] **David Crabill:** Well, One nice thing about freeze dried foods is that the shelf life is practically indefinite, right? Are you typically bringing way more to the market than you know you can sell?

[00:41:03] **Nicole DiMarco:** Oh yeah the reason why now is because our first outdoor event we did last October, It was somewhere between four to six hours and we had sold out with two hours left to go. And I thought we had brought a decent amount of product.

[00:41:17] We had brought about 600 bags with us of candy that day. And we had pretty much sold out, like I said, with two hours to go, we were left with one item and my husband is basically, Sitting at the tables, handing out cards. And you know, that one product that was left, people were like, Oh, do you have the most popular products that they had seen on TikTok?

[00:41:34] They were looking for that. So now we learn from that. We always bring double what we expect to sell. And the other thing is we try to go through our product pretty quickly. It does have a long shelf life, but for most of our products, we're getting through everything that we've created within a month's time.

[00:41:49] It's rare for us to have something last longer than that. So we like that. We like to know that all of our stuff is, you know, as fresh as can be. A lot of times I'm actually bagging up stuff like the morning of a market and bringing it with us. But yeah, we're at the point now we have, we're pretty much bringing double what we expect to sell.

[00:42:05] **David Crabill:** So going back to when you started the business and I know you have more types of products now, but what did you actually start out selling when you did your first market?

[00:42:17] **Nicole DiMarco:** So, We had the most popular candy, so we um, we have to obviously trademark, we're not allowed to have the real name of the product on there, so everything you see has a given name that we've named it,

but the most popular ones, we started with about 12 12 candies was our initial, and then for the fall we had gone into some like, fall baskets.

[00:42:39] And then when we got to the Christmas season, we had all kinds of stocking stuffers. We made baskets. We did, um, all different types of things filled with the candy. And I think by the time we got to Christmas, I think we were up to almost 18 products at that point. And then once we got into the spring we got to the point where we were offering between 20 to 30 items at every event.

[00:43:01] **David Crabill:** Yeah, so Skittles is one of the most popular freeze dried candies out there, and I see that you named them Moon Blast And you mentioned the trademark issue, which I haven't heard discussed before. So is that like your retail management experience coming into play there?

[00:43:19] **Nicole DiMarco:** No, so actually when we first decided to do this, there was a Facebook group for freeze dried candy makers. So I joined the group and I just, you know, I just sat there and scrolled. Like I was looking for as much information as I could possibly find on the process. And that was where I saw that people were getting in trouble for using that, that given name.

[00:43:39] I was like that makes sense. It's a trademark. So then when I looked more into that, I was like, wow, you really have to be careful. Like the name has to be changed, like so much of a percentage. And people were actually getting sent letters, like cease and desist letters, all kinds of things for using the given name.

[00:43:53] Like the trademark name. So we were like, right off the bat, we're like, okay, we were not doing that. We're going to go ahead and, you know, give them all a name. And we were like, I know some of the names don't always match up. We have to tell people what they are.

[00:44:05] Cause it's, you know, it's, they don't know. So that was, kind of a little bit of a thing where you're like, you really have to explain it to people a little bit in the beginning, especially online, because I can't even say the name to go next to the other name because you're not allowed to.

[00:44:19] **David Crabill:** Well, It sounds like you're doing a significant amount of sales at these events. I mean, you mentioned you would be happy with 500 at a smaller event. I think a lot of entrepreneurs would be very happy with 500 at any event. And you're talking about doing way more than that at

other events. Like what do you think is holding you back right now or, or what are the challenges you're facing?

[00:44:46] **Nicole DiMarco:** So our biggest thing is just not having a commercial kitchen. When I tell you, I mean, not as much now, but like right around Easter time is probably where I noticed that there was, people were messaging us and they wanted us to be able to wholesale.

[00:44:57] They wanted to be able to sell our products in their stores. So not having a commercial kitchen is primarily what's holding us back right now, like we have that social media following. We have, you know, we have a product that people want that's selling very well online in general, and we can't access that market.

[00:45:13] So until we get into the commercial kitchen, which we've been looking for, we can't find one that we feel is like either a reasonable rate per month. Or in a great location that makes sense. So we're kind of stuck. We almost signed the line on for one about two months ago, but ultimately we decided against it because of the size of it, because we're kind of maxed out on our size right now.

[00:45:34] It's a bigger production than I think some people realize. The machine itself is, you know, that takes up some space, but it's a lot of product. Like once, you know, before it's done, then after it's bagged and storing all of it, it's a lot. So the space we were going to move into was a little too small.

[00:45:49] So we ultimately decided not to go with it.

[00:45:51] And then we'll re We're going to revisit the topic of the commercial kitchen in January, unless something Comes up and it's the perfect fit.

[00:45:58] But we kind of decided to kind of take a step back from the commercial kitchen aspect because we were stressing ourselves out with it. Cause we weren't finding what we wanted And we, yeah, could we just move into a space that's not right and do the things we could, but at the end of the day, I was like, I want to make sure we're making the best decisions for longevity.

[00:46:14] **David Crabill:** Did you ever consider trying to build a commercial kitchen into your home or onto your property somewhere.

[00:46:23] **Nicole DiMarco:** So we did, so we actually did, we got, we called, you know, the board of health, we called all the different people and it got down

to the township. And what the township said was we could build, we have, so we have a detached garage on our property already. they sell those different sheds, right?

[00:46:39] The bigger sheds were like, we can get one of those and we can kind of convert it in. The problem was in our town, they don't allow you to take, you can't run water to any detached property or detached. structure on the property. So that was our reason why we can't have a commercial kitchen on our property, because that was actually one of our first things.

[00:46:57] Once we found out that was a thing, we're like, Oh, we have plenty of space. We'll just build a commercial kitchen. And then we realized pretty quickly that that wasn't going to be an option, at least not in our town.

[00:47:05] they did say we could go and try to get a variance, but you've got to pay for that. And there's no guarantees. They're going to say, yes. So we were like, you know what? at the end of the day we're, We're still in our first, you know, in our first year, we're still growing.

[00:47:17] And we're kind of at that point, like I said, we, It stinks because we thought we would be able to grow a little quicker. but we also thought we were going to have the whole online aspect when we first started. And we didn't have that. So when we changed course, it did kind of change our whole entire path of what we were doing.

[00:47:33] **David Crabill:** Now, even though you can't ship nationally, which I know you want to, you can still ship within the state of New Jersey. Do you get very many online orders or do any shipping at this point?

[00:47:46] **Nicole DiMarco:** So we've only had very few people actually inquire about shipping within New Jersey and most people just meet us. Um, We meet in our town locally and then we open it up where people can place orders and just meet us, you know, any event that we're at. So typically that seems to work for most people. We did offer at one point a delivery option, which we still kind of have on the table, but it is hard because sometimes like people live a half an hour away.

[00:48:11] And I'm like, then we have to figure out, like, do we charge for that? you know, For physically driving to someone's location and stuff like that. So, if somebody said something like, Hey, can you ship it to New Jersey? We absolutely would.

[00:48:20] **David Crabill:** How do you determine your pricing?

[00:48:24] **Nicole DiMarco:** So this is where it gets a little interesting with that. So when we first started doing this, obviously if you look at the prices online this is a product that's pretty novel. So people were selling it for quite a high amount of money. We kind of sat down, we ran the numbers and once we got the machine, we were seeing how long things took to produce, what are the best prices we can get on the product, the packaging and all this stuff.

[00:48:47] And then we thought about the fact we have three kids. I mean, they're all teenagers and older now, but when we were at fairs and festivals, It wasn't as likely that we're going to pay 10 a bag for candy, right? So if we have three kids, that's 30 bucks right there, right? So we were like, we need to come in at a price that's fair, reasonable, and that we're making a good profit at.

[00:49:05] So for our standard bags, we came in at the 5 price point. And You know, a lot of people said to us, they're like, you can sell this for so much more. And I'm like, we know that. But what we find is that people buy more because our prices are lower. So we volume sell, if that makes sense. And we've also found it, so we have our standard bag at that price.

[00:49:25] We also have no problem selling bags.

[00:49:31] We've also done baskets at different price points. We've done you know, mystery boxes, so we really don't have any problem selling at any price point, but I think the fact that we have all of our items at an affordable price point for anybody pretty much to buy, especially, like I said, if you have multiple kids and you're out at these festivals and fairs, I think we made it very reasonable for anybody to buy.

[00:49:50] And if you were at our table, you'll notice that we have different sized bags but all the bags are the same price. And that's because some things just take up more room and some things take up less room. So what we did was we kind of broke it down by the price. We're like, okay, what makes sense for this bag?

[00:50:05] So we wanted to make sure all of our bags are full. They, you know, we want them to be full bags. We don't want people to feel like they got chipped when they open up the bag. So what we did was we, Basically purchase the bags based on what the item is and that's what goes into that bag. So like for the peach rings, like if we tried to put the peach rings in the same bag, we put our Skittles in, you would only get two peach rings in the bag.

[00:50:27] so we bumped the bag size up. So you get about five to six peach rings in the bag for the same price, but still balances out. Economically, like for the profit margin and all that, it still balances out and there are some things that we make a little bit more on? Yes, but it covers the, where we're making a little bit less

[00:50:43] **David Crabill:** So how many bag sizes are you using right now?

[00:50:48] **Nicole DiMarco:** for the standard size. Right now for the \$5 bag, we use three different size bags, but altogether we use about six. About seven bags because we go all the way up to a mega bag that we offer that we charge anywhere from like 20 to 25 dollars for

[00:51:06] **David Crabill:** Does that actually sell well?

[00:51:09] **Nicole DiMarco:** yeah, they do when we do some of the things like, you know, we base it out like we're like Okay, what's going on there? We factor in the cost of everything based on how much you're getting and the mega bags were actually born from So when you're learning how to freeze the right things, sometimes you put the wrong temperature in or something doesn't, you know, it gets bigger than what can fit in the bags that we bought for them.

[00:51:31] So we were like, we were throwing the product out. And then we found when we were sharing our mistakes on the Facebook page, people were like, Oh, I would still eat that. So we were like, all right, well let's. You know, I'm not making them as much now because we're doing so many markets. So we really don't do as much of the mega bags.

[00:51:46] But when we were doing the bags, at the end of the week, we'd be like, all right, what do we have? And we would create the mega bags with it. And then, you know, like I said, we offer them for about \$20 and we would usually sell them with no problem.

[00:51:56] **David Crabill:** Now, I know that you are doing a lot of different products and you're constantly experimenting with new products. I can see that through your Facebook posts. Is that just because you are trying to be creative or are you doing that as a business strategy?

[00:52:12] **Nicole DiMarco:** Both. One, I love to be creative. And two, as more people freeze drying, and as you're able to find, like you can go to five below now, and you can find freeze dried candy. You can go to the grocery store and

you find it. So I want to create products that people can't find at the grocery store, and they may not be finding other people who are freezing drying.

[00:52:31] I think it was about two weeks ago we created one. And it was, you know, we were not allowed to freeze dry cherries, so I had to go buy the freeze dry cherries. But we said we did freeze dry cherry, almond, coconut, and white chocolate, and we wrapped it up into a product that we know will freeze dry.

[00:52:46] We combine all those items to create a completely unique freeze dried item that you're not going to find somewhere else. So it's kind of both. It's creative. I love to make things and make things fun and different and follow different trends. But I also want it to be something that's exclusive to us that somebody else isn't doing.

[00:53:02] **David Crabill:** Now, obviously there's still a lot of people that aren't familiar with these products. Are you offering samples at your markets?

[00:53:09] **Nicole DiMarco:** So yeah, we have to offer closed samples. So it's got to be a completely sealed bag and then, you know, have all the information on it. But yes, and that way we're allowed to.

[00:53:20] **David Crabill:** So that sounds like a lot of prep work.

[00:53:23] **Nicole DiMarco:** It is a lot of prep work. Yeah. We actually weren't initially well, it's easy for me to explain to people cause I'll say, you know, Hey, this item, it tastes like, you know, whatever the candy is. And I'll be like, it's going to taste like that, but it's going to crunch like this.

[00:53:37] And they'd be like, Oh, that's interesting. They can see it with their eyes, but they already associate that product with a totally different texture where our process has completely changed that texture that they know. And then we've also found some people will not like something in its original state, but then they love it freeze dried.

[00:53:55] So yeah, it definitely makes a difference having that for them to at least experience it. And I love watching people get excited. We're like, Oh my God like, are you like, this is crazy. Or I didn't think that's what it would be like. So it's definitely a huge part of it.

[00:54:07] **David Crabill:** So I know you've been a manager for a long time before starting this business. Have you done any hiring or like, do you have anybody working in this business yet?

[00:54:20] **Nicole DiMarco:** Nope. High fly. Nope. This is all me. It's all me. That's it for now. Like Is the plan to have a location where we can hire people? Absolutely.

[00:54:29] **David Crabill:** Now, I know you said earlier that you would never leave your job in order to start a business, but then, you know, the job closed and then you considered it and hoped to, you know, free up your time with this business. Would you say that? The cottage food business has actually been what you were hoping it would be at this point.

[00:54:51] **Nicole DiMarco:** For some things. Yeah. So I'm able to create my own schedule. I'm definitely working probably more hours than I did when I worked a traditional nine, you know, 40 hour a week job. I'm definitely working more hours than that, but I get to create those hours, right? Like, I'm like, okay, I'm going to work like typically, you know, Monday, Tuesdays are like my unofficial days off where I'm still running candy, but I'm not heading out to events or anything like that.

[00:55:15] It's like, I'm home. I'm, you know, doing what I want to do at home. So in that respect, yes. Now with the cottage end of it, with some of the restrictions, no. So I feel like if someone was going to start that cottage business I would advise them 100 percent to go through and really read through all of the guidelines.

[00:55:32] Cause can you, yeah, can you throw caution to the wind and say, Oh, I'm not going to do that. Absolutely. But I don't recommend that. I recommend going in there, making your decision based on what you can and cannot do and see if that's going to work for you. And if it's not going to work for you, then you find your path of whatever, what else might.

[00:55:47] There's so many, there's so many ideas out there and you know, you see it all the time, like people come up with an invention. You're like, Oh, why didn't I think of that? And that's kind of how I think. I'm like, I didn't come up with freeze dried candy. I'm just, I'm a maker of it. Someone else created it.

[00:56:01] Those ideas are out there. So, if you. If you don't like all the rules behind the cottage law in your state, because every state's going to be different, find something that kind of works with what you want to do and what your end goals are.

[00:56:12] **David Crabill:** So I know you have big plans for your business moving forward, and you've been in this for, just about a year now. Why do you love running your business?

[00:56:24] **Nicole DiMarco:** I love the creative end of it. So when I worked in retail, I have so many stories from all those retails and stuff like that, like good and bad. I mean, I've had some amazing district managers and you know, that were kind of over the years and then I had once, you know, where I would, you know, I worked with them and that's great, but.

[00:56:44] I had some that I really learned from. And I think what I like is that when I'm doing this, it's whatever I want, right? Well, obviously following the, the laws and the guidelines, whatever, but I'm able to do whatever I want. I'm able to set it how I want. I'm able to create the products that I want.

[00:56:59] I'm able to basically do what I want. And that's what I like because for so many years, I, Worked in retail. I worked through holidays. My daughter did cheerleading for one year. I was only able to go to two of her events. The kids growing up and stuff like that. They knew, like, you know, Mommy was always at work. So I love that I'm able to have the freedom to do what I want to do on my own time. And that's the biggest thing for this. Now as we grow and everything like that, I'm hoping that we get to the point where we can have maybe multiple locations and have a staff and all those things. Do I know if we're going to get there?

[00:57:35] No, but that's the goal, right? So that's kind of my plan. I'm hoping to have a life, as we go is the, the financial stability and the freedom of time. So right now I'm not in the freedom of time part where I'm, I'm definitely working more hours than I typically was before, but I have a little more of a choice on how I'm working those hours.

[00:57:53] **David Crabill:** So do you have any advice that you would give someone who is just starting out as a cottage food entrepreneur?

[00:58:00] **Nicole DiMarco:** I think the biggest thing is, is really think of your end goal, create your business plan mindfully. Like to be Very strategic. It's one of those times where I like to kind of fly off the cuff a lot, but this is something where I was pretty strategic once I was like, okay, I have a goal. How am I going to get there?

[00:58:21] And I think you want to create something that you want to do every day. Don't do it Just because like I know you, it's just almost like getting stuck

in a bad career path. You don't wanna get stuck in something that's gonna make you miserable. So just kind of know what you're getting yourself into, explore all the options of it and all the avenues, all the ways you can take it, and kind of have your end goal in place of how you wanna handle that and get there.

[00:58:42] **David Crabill:** Well, Awesome, Nicole. Thank you so much for 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?

[00:58:55] **Nicole DiMarco:** So they can reach out through our Facebook page. It's All About The Freeze. They can reach out through there. We also have our email, which is just allaboutthefreeze@yahoo.com. Those are the two easiest ways to get a hold of us.

[00:59:07] **David Crabill:** Great. Well, Thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today.

[00:59:12] **Nicole DiMarco:** Thank you so much for having me.

[00:59:15] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager Podcast.

[00:59:20] For more information about this episode, go to forrager.com/podcast/125.

[00:59:27] And if you are 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.

[00:59:40] And finally, if you're thinking about selling your own homemade food, check out my free mini course where I walk you through the steps you need to take to get a cottage food business off the ground. to get the course, go to cottagefoodcourse.com.

[00:59:52] Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.