

Wynter Hosier with Etta's Gooney Goodies

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 Wynter Hosier.

[00:00:12] But first, ConvertKit is rebranding to Kit, and recently made a pretty big announcement that it's great news for cottage food entrepreneurs.

[00:00:21] 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 allow you to use one automation sequence for free as well.

[00:00:42] 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.

[00:01:02] All right, so I have Wynter on the show today. She lives in Greentown, Indiana and sells macarons and other baked sweets with her food business, Etta's Gooney Goodies.

[00:01:14] Wynter started her business from home back in 2016, and it has been quite the crazy ride since then. From navigating Indiana's very strict cottage food laws, to buying a storefront that she couldn't even use for three whole years, to starting a Facebook group that grew to over 35, 000 members, Wynter's journey has taken many unexpected turns.

[00:01:41] But ultimately, through lots of perseverance and a strong focus on fostering community, she now runs an increasingly successful storefront and shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon.

[00:01:54] And with that, let's jump right into this episode.

[00:01:59] Welcome to the show, Wynter. Nice to have you here.

[00:02:02] **Wynter Hosier:** Thanks, David. It's nice to talk to you.

[00:02:06] **David Crabill:** Well, Wynter, can you take me back to the beginning of this journey? How did it all get started?

[00:02:11] **Wynter Hosier:** well, actually, I was in grad school and I was working towards an MBA and I started stress baking and taking in all the baked goods to my classmates and teachers and was asked to do A four layer chocolate and strawberry cheesecake for one of my nieces.

[00:02:31] And my sister in law looked at me and was like, Hey, why don't you sell your baked goods? And so I looked into the laws for Indiana, and the next day I started a Facebook page. Two days later, I had my very first order.

[00:02:45] **David Crabill:** Now I would say the vast majority of the guests on my podcast do not have an MBA. So you did get your MBA, correct?

[00:02:54] **Wynter Hosier:** No, I did not. I did one year of my MBA and then I switched to a Master's in Public Management. So I've got a good base foundation for both of those two sets. skills

[00:03:11] and it's all been stuff that I've been able to apply in my business.

[00:03:14] **David Crabill:** So when you say it's all stuff that you've been able to use, are there specific things you can think of that you've pulled from both of those experiences and put into your business?

[00:03:26] **Wynter Hosier:** The main thing that comes to mind when it comes to the numbers is one of my professors telling us that you are going to have some items that you have incredibly high profit on and some items that you're going to have next to no profit, but people will come in and buy those items and they'll also buy the high profit items.

[00:03:47] **David Crabill:** So what are those items in your business?

[00:03:51] **Wynter Hosier:** They're pretty much my brownie bars. I've got different brownies, chocolate brownies, and then some have add-ins and additional flavors. The more extravagant ones cost me more to make, but then I have the lower ones that are just two different add-ins. Like, For example, I have what's called a brownie overload, and it is a brownie base that has Reese's cups in it.

[00:04:18] It's topped with my signature caramel sauce and some peanut butter, and then a vanilla marshmallow layer, and it's, the marshmallow's every bit as thick as the brownie. And it's got chocolate chips, Reese's chips, and crushed Oreos in it. That one, I don't have as high of a profit on because it has so many other flavors.

[00:04:36] But when they see that one, they decide to go ahead and get a smaller plain brownie too, which is almost entirely profit. They kind of balance each other out. The smaller brownies are higher profit, they're easier for me to make, they're not as labor intensive and I sell more of them. The brownie overloads make them drool, get them excited to try it and other flavors.

[00:04:58] **David Crabill:** Interesting. Yeah. I was going to ask if there are certain items that have super high profit, why not just focus completely on those items?

[00:05:07] **Wynter Hosier:** Because I need to catch the customer's eyes and set myself apart from my competitors. And so if I just do the basic, simple, easy things, then they might as well go next door to the local chain that has seven different locations in our state. I have to be different to bring them in.

[00:05:27] **David Crabill:** Makes sense. Now, when did you actually start this business?

[00:05:32] **Wynter Hosier:** It was actually January 6th of 2016.

[00:05:36] **David Crabill:** At that time, were you familiar with Indiana's cottage food law or anything?

[00:05:43] **Wynter Hosier:** No, it wasn't until January 4th when it was suggested to me to start selling my baked goods that I actually looked up the legislation and I literally read the actual legislation. I had looked up forrager and I'd seen information from forrager. And I had seen other things that other bakers had read, but I'm one of the people who likes to dig deep and learn the ins and outs.

[00:06:07] And so by the end of my home based baking career, I pretty much had that legislation memorized as far as the key points.

[00:06:16] **David Crabill:** Yeah. Indiana's pretty notable because for the longest time there, they were very restrictive. Did you feel like the restrictions there were frustrating for you?

[00:06:29] **Wynter Hosier:** They were incredibly frustrating, especially with the representative that I dealt with with my local health department. He was a great guy, but he didn't know the legislation as well as I did. And so, When I learned it, I saw that there was a caveat that during inclement weather, I could go inside.

[00:06:49] And it didn't matter where I was setting up inside, if the weather was bad outside, I could go inside as long as I had permission from the property owner to set up my roadside stand inside. And so that's what I did, and I set up at a local boutique. They let me set up outside in the parking lot during the summer and inside during the winter, and someone reported me to The local health department and, that business owner was contacted by the health department and they told her that she wasn't in trouble but that if I showed up again that I was going to be issued a very stern letter telling me that I couldn't do that. And I knew I could because I'd read the legislation. So I reached out to the health department. I explained what I'd read and why, how I had interpreted it. And he disagreed with me and he told me that he would get back to me. Two hours later he emailed me back and said that he was wrong and that I was allowed to move inside during inclement weather.

[00:07:47] So it helps to see the summaries but it's also very helpful to read everything yourself.

[00:07:53] **David Crabill:** Yeah, no, and I would agree with that. I mean, Forrager is definitely a starting point for people to kind of understand the law, especially when oftentimes overwhelming to like try to read through all the legalese, but it's definitely not completely comprehensive in terms of, you know, all the details that come with the law.

[00:08:13] And now that's so interesting. You were reported by someone and, what year was that? Was that the very beginning of your business?

[00:08:21] **Wynter Hosier:** No, that was actually in 2018 or 2019.

[00:08:27] **David Crabill:** So you were a couple of years into your business and what did that first year or two look like? My first year, I didn't do any events or any farmer's markets. It was all just word of mouth, and I had either 4, 000 in sales for the full year. And I was ecstatic. I had no idea that I could bring in that much extra income working at home. I used babysitting money to get it started and I had, A little girl at home who wasn't yet two years old.

[00:09:02] **Wynter Hosier:** So It was nice to have some expendable income that I didn't feel I was taking away from the household to have or to even earn. Year two I started at the Kokomo Farmers Market and I, Had a bunch of people coming to the market who had never even heard of French macarons or macaroons, however you prefer to pronounce it.

[00:09:23] And so I started out by giving away free samples of the whole cookies because nobody was buying them. And That was all that I did for the first, I'd probably say a year and two or three months. It was just. cupcakes for the first few weeks, and then I learned about macarons, and I set out to conquer the little cookies, and so that's what I became known for.

[00:09:45] So Year two, I was doing one farmer's market and word of mouth. By year three, I was up to two farmer's markets. Year four, I was doing four farmer's markets, and I went to an international cake show in St. Louis and competed, and I brought home a judge's choice award in 2019. And it's just grown and grown each year.

[00:10:12] **David Crabill:** So you said that you learned about macarons after you started the business and then the macarons became a focus. so What was your vision when you actually started the business at the beginning of 2016?

[00:10:26] **Wynter Hosier:** I thought that I was going to be selling cheesecakes and regular cakes, but then I learned that I wasn't legally allowed to sell cheesecakes. So I had to completely pivot from basically day two and figure out where to go. So I started following different Facebook groups and fell in love with Liz Merrick's work and started doing some sculpted cakes.

[00:10:52] And, I don't know, dipped pretzels, chocolate covered Oreos, the simple things, and sculpted cakes. But One day I was working on an order, and the Kids Baking Championship show was on, and they kept talking about the cookies, and how some people thought they were cookies, some people thought they were pastries, everybody thought they were difficult, they're supposed to form a skin, they're supposed to have feet, they're supposed to have round, smoothed tops, the icing is only supposed to fill them so far, and the main challenge for the children was to nail all of those things and then they had to stack the macarons nine inches tall and build a tower without any type of support.

[00:11:29] And I was just hooked. I've always been one of those people that if I can read the instructions and I have all of the necessary equipment and the

physical strength, then I can do it. So I had to learn about these cookies and now they are my bread and butter, basically.

[00:11:47] **David Crabill:** Now, you said that you started this business just off of the recommendation of a family member or a friend, correct?

[00:11:56] **Wynter Hosier:** Correct.

[00:11:58] **David Crabill:** So had you ever thought about starting a food business before that?

[00:12:03] **Wynter Hosier:** No, my first jobs were Perkins, a family restaurant and bakery, and Dairy Queen. I always baked during the holidays with my mom. We made fudge and pumpkin rolls and those kinds of things. I always made all the birthday cakes for friends and family, but I had never even contemplated the idea of opening a restaurant or a bakery or selling food as a business.

[00:12:28] It hadn't, hadn't even crossed my mind. I thought I was going to be a middle school music teacher since I was in middle school.

[00:12:35] **David Crabill:** That's interesting. It sounds like you had quite a lot of food service experience like food was quite a focus of your life for many years working at restaurants and such, do you feel like there are aspects of your work in the restaurants that you've brought into the food business?

[00:12:56] **Wynter Hosier:** Absolutely. Since I had worked around. food and serving people. Food can create bonds between people and it can be an amazing thing. So I learned early on that presentation matters, that taste matters, that pricing is of course pertinent as well. I loved working at Perkins, because I was in charge of the bakery display case, so I got to climb in and clean it, but I also got to ice, like, the Boston cream and the cinnamon rolls and that kind of stuff, so I really enjoyed that, and then when I went to Dairy Queen, I loved creating different flavors, just crazy off the wall combos, and that has 100 percent worked to make my business as successful as it is.

[00:13:46] Because I still do that now and my customers will come in to see what crazy thing I just posted on Facebook that they want to try.

[00:13:54] **David Crabill:** So even though you did, you know, \$4,000 to \$6,000 worth of sales in the first year, and you're very happy with that it still sounds

like it was a pretty slow build up. adding things over time. Would you agree with that?

[00:14:11] **Wynter Hosier:** 100%. Absolutely. My business has grown slowly and steadily. I've been at it. January will make nine years. So we're almost at a decade and growing each year. It's definitely been a slow process, a steady process. I don't know that I could have handled it if it had gone any other way. If I had just jumped in with both feet and got swamped, I probably would have freaked out, panicked and put the brakes on.

[00:14:40] **David Crabill:** Has there ever been a time where you felt frustrated or, or wanted to quit your business?

[00:14:50] **Wynter Hosier:** Yeah, of course there has been I was in a relationship for 17 years and it put a lot of stress and strain on the relationship and now we're not together anymore but I still have the business that I love and it brings me so much joy but it definitely caused a lot of friction in the marriage because I was constantly striving to make it better and to have it to grow and to build it into something that could carry on to my daughter, that she could have, not that she would have to run.

[00:15:22] I want it to be left for her, not left on her. So I want to build it and make it sustainable. And if I had ever quit in the times that I'd got frustrated, then I wouldn't have any type of legacy to leave for her. And that's really important to me.

[00:15:39] **David Crabill:** You grew this over the course of a few years doing more and more farmers markets. It sounds like selling at you know, essentially a pop-up shop. And then I know your business has grown a lot since then. So when did you start to like, look into taking the next step with your business?

[00:16:00] **Wynter Hosier:** In 2019, my sales hit over \$55, 000 and I knew that there was nothing that anyone could tell me or say to me again, that would take away that feeling of accomplishment, that my little business made more than my spouse who was earning 25 an hour. It was a phenomenal feeling. However,

[00:16:24] I was completely tapped out. I could not maximize production. I could not add anything else to my schedule. My husband at the time had to take two weeks off before Christmas to help me fill orders and I knew then that I wasn't going to be able to grow or sustain anything unless I raised my pricing so that I could decrease demand and I got into a commercial space, so I started looking for places that I could rent.

[00:16:52] I did not want to commit to owning a building or to leasing a commercial space. I just wanted a shared kitchen somewhere so that I could see how I could change what my production capacity would be with commercial space and commercial equipment. That didn't happen though. Um, A building came up for sale two miles down the road from where I lived and we purchased it and now I own it outright.

[00:17:18] I don't have a mortgage. I don't have rent. It's just my building and It's made things better and worse for the business because I still do a lot of traveling and that's where all my sales are. Walking in traffic at this location is not Enough to sustain the bakery on its own. So I'm actually already considering moving.

[00:17:40] I bought the building at the start of 2020 and we had a heck of a time getting equipment in and getting workers to come in and complete the build out. I didn't actually have the grand opening until March of 2023. So that was three years. that I paid for all of the utilities and insurance and everything on a building that I didn't have access to use.

[00:18:05] So that was very tough. You were asking if I ever thought about quitting and throwing in the towel. That happened a lot during those three years when it felt like this place was never going to get opened and it was just going to drain all of my resources and energy. But I've powered through and now I have partnered with an organization called Friends of Fred. They're really cool.

[00:18:25] they used to do food trucks themselves, but they realized that it's hard to always get gigs and to keep your schedule full. So now customers reach out to Friends of Fred and say, Hey, we're looking for two savory food trucks and a sweets person. Can you provide us with people? So They take the available vendors and send all of our menus to the potential customers.

[00:18:48] And Then the customers pick, and Friends of Fred. takes a cut of our sales. Thanks to Friends of Fred, I have broken into the Indianapolis corporate orders, so now I'm doing more business. I don't have to focus as much on in person sales because the last few of these orders have been And I just get to make everything and drop it off before their events.

[00:19:13] And everything's done. Friends of Fred has been phenomenal for my business. It has relieved a lot of the fears and the unpredictability of especially the winter months when there aren't a whole bunch of fairs and festivals and farmers markets to set up at.

[00:19:30] **David Crabill:** Now, Would you have been able to be one of their vendors if you were still running under the cottage food law?

[00:19:38] **Wynter Hosier:** Since the cottage food law was changed July 1st of 2022, yes, I would have been able to still work with Friends of Fred.

[00:19:47] **David Crabill:** Now it's interesting, right? Cause you, you bought this shop uh, well before the. the law changed, but then you didn't actually open it until after the law changed. So in hindsight, do you wish you had not taken that leap?

[00:20:03] **Wynter Hosier:** No, because having the building allowed me to hire employees, and it also allowed me to expand My menu offerings. I can now do chicken salad sandwiches, and I can do things with cream cheese icing.

[00:20:20] I can sell Cheesecakes. So I definitely would have still wanted to get into a commercial space to expand my menu and to bring on help. And to get the bakery out of my house so that I could just be at home when I was at home.

[00:20:33] **David Crabill:** I actually wanted to ask about that. Cause You said you were doing 55, 000 of sales from your home. So Can you just describe a little bit about what that actually looked like?

[00:20:45] **Wynter Hosier:** We had a formal dining room and my formal dining room turned into what we called the middle room or the baking room and I had a 20 quart Hobart in it The prep table was secured to a stud so that the 20 quart Hobart would hold still and I could mix. I had three industrial storage racks, one on each wall, two on one wall. I had Five KitchenAid stand mixers.

[00:21:10] I had two food processors, like Two big commercial processors and four little food processors. So I truly took over the home. The kitchen had cabinets. on the floor and on the ceiling and it was a relatively large kitchen and all but four cabinets were filled with baking supplies and baking tools.

[00:21:34] It would be stressful if I had milk for my business, but we didn't have milk for home, and so I was thinking of the supplies, just milk as an example, but there were supplies that I knew that I had for the bakery that were designated and marked as the bakery's supplies, and so I'd wake up in the middle of the night to go do my baking while everybody was asleep, and I'd get into the kitchen and discover that Something was used for home that was designated as a baking thing, so that, that caused some issues.

[00:22:06] As far as the workload goes, I feel like I started working when my daughter goes to school in the morning. I would clean up either shortly before or shortly after she got home, and then as soon as my daughter and her dad went to sleep, I would get up and get back to work, and there were times where I would regularly have between three and four hours of sleep for two or three weeks at a time, depending on what particular season it was.

[00:22:35] The worst was definitely year two of the hot cocoa bomb craze. Because that was when everybody knew what they were, everybody and their brother started making them, but I switched mine up. I'd always used Belgian chocolate and homemade cocoa mix, but that second year I started making homemade marshmallows that were all kinds of flavors, like Andes mint, caramel, Lavender earl gray, there was peppermint, cotton candy, and then I had the complimentary homemade hot cocoa mixes to go with it.

[00:23:06] So while everybody else was making overly sickly sweet treats using store bought candy melts and mixes and marshmallows, mine were different because I used high quality and homemade ingredients, and that was When my sales hit 55, 000 for the first time. And then I raised my prices and decreased demand and was able to breathe the next year.

[00:23:33] And my sales were probably 52, 000 instead of 55, 000, but I was only working two days a week. I was prepping two days a week and then selling on Saturday and Sunday. So in total it is four days, but my production went from being five days a week and selling two days a week to producing maybe three days a week and selling on the weekends.

[00:23:55] So it created a much better life balance.

[00:23:58] **David Crabill:** Yes, the Hot Cocoa Bomb craze was definitely crazy, and do you know how many Hot Cocoa Bombs you actually sold?

[00:24:08] **Wynter Hosier:** I could go and look at my records if Square still has them, but I know that I had weeks where I was selling six to eight hundred of them. There was a two week period where I had over twenty thousand dollars in sales just from Hot Cocoa Bomb orders, and pre orders only.

[00:24:27] **David Crabill:** Yeah, it was a crazy time. Um, When did you actually purchase and acquire the shop?

[00:24:36] **Wynter Hosier:** I found out that it was a possibility on January 29th of 2020, and the purchase was completed on March 18th of 2020.

[00:24:51] **David Crabill:** Wow, March 18th of 2020. That is basically right when the pandemic started or probably just, just after.

[00:25:00] So You had said that you weren't able to really open the shop for three years, but am I gathering here that you were able to use it as a commercial kitchen, right? it just wasn't a storefront for that time ,

[00:25:13] **Wynter Hosier:** No, I. I couldn't even use it as the commercial kitchen because we still had to get plumbers in here to redo some pipes. And I couldn't get a refrigerator in here for quite a while. There were several issues. The last few things that needed to be done were some electrical work replaced and repaired and trying to get the plumbers in to install the handwashing sink, utility sink, dishwasher, all of that stuff.

[00:25:41] And once that was all finally done, it was And that was after we went through four different plumbing companies to try to get everything done and taken care of.

[00:25:53] **David Crabill:** So You were still using the cottage food law all the way up until 2023, is that right?

[00:26:00] **Wynter Hosier:** Correct.

[00:26:02] **David Crabill:** Here's an interesting question. Let's say you lived in a state that did not have such a restrictive law. I mean, Indiana, for the longest time, had one of the most restrictive cottage food laws in the country. So, Let's just say you were able to, from day one in 2016, you could sell from home, you could sell at events uh, maybe you could even sell wholesale.

[00:26:27] Where do you think you'd be today?

[00:26:30] **Wynter Hosier:** As far as the business, I could very possibly still be working from home if I was allowed to have outside help. If I was not allowed to have outside help or it was one of those weird states that doesn't allow commercial Kitchen equipment to be used at the home businesses and didn't have a cap Then I would probably fully function at home because it's easier It's so much easier to just go work when there's nothing else to do Than what it is to try to cram everything into the limited hours that I am at the

[00:27:05] **David Crabill:** So you, you don't necessarily feel like Indiana's cottage food law hampered your sales trajectory. Is that right?

[00:27:15] **Wynter Hosier:** No, I feel like that as long as you had the product that people wanted that followed the state's guidelines, that you could sell it. We weren't allowed to use butter in our icings in some counties. Now, I spoke with the inspectors and when I explained how I made my buttercream, they would tell me yes, it was okay or no, it was not okay. And all of the counties were okay with it except for one. That was nice because I wasn't technically legally allowed to use it.

[00:27:47] But when I explained how I did it, they were like, ah, cooked, baked, same thing, go for it.

[00:27:53] **David Crabill:** Yeah, it is frustrating. There's, So much variation with different counties, different cities oftentimes,

[00:28:00] **Wynter Hosier:** Yeah, I've got a Marshmallow Facebook group that I started because I had questions and didn't have a Facebook group about marshmallows to turn to, so I just created one. And so, As the group's creator, I've seen a lot of posts from different people throughout the country who are like, how come they can do it here and I can't do it here?

[00:28:21] We're literally 45 minutes apart, I don't understand. And so that's incredibly frustrating that it's so close together, and so different from state to state. It would be really nice if it was more cohesive, but I understand why it's not.

[00:28:37] **David Crabill:** Well, I definitely wanted to ask you about your Facebook group. That's kind of crazy,

[00:28:44] **Wynter Hosier:** It's definitely a crazy train. Who knew there were over 35, 000 people who want to make homemade marshmallows Okay, so the marshmallow group started because of the hot cocoa bombs. I had said that I used the store bought ones my first year doing them, and then the second year I started making homemade marshmallows.

[00:29:06] And All of the recipes said to make your marshmallows, let them sit for a few hours, pull them out of the pan, cut them up, dust them, and Then you immediately put them into an airtight container, and they should last for, at a minimum, two weeks, but up to four weeks just in an airtight container, or you could freeze them for several months.

[00:29:26] I would do all of that, and my marshmallows would turn soupy. And so I had commented on one of the threads in the Hot Cocoa Bomb group and

was like, Hey, does anybody make their own marshmallows? Have you had this problem? What am I doing wrong? Where can I find advice? There isn't a Facebook group. And another woman in the group was like well, we need to make one.

[00:29:48] And She said, I can't make one. I don't have time. And I was like, hold on. So I thought of a name and I created the group. And then I went back and I shared the link in the hot cocoa bomb group. I recruited group members that were very active and very kind. I started from day one with this representation of me and my business. This is my group and I get to set the tone. So I want it to be a group where kindness flourishes, education is important, food safety comes first, and Now I've got a great group of individuals throughout the country and we all get along so well that we had a marshmallow convention last year in North Carolina. There was less than four months of prep time.

[00:30:41] And we ended up with somewhere between 80 and a hundred guests. And This year we're going to have one right here. About three minutes from my bakery. This one's going to be bigger. We will have different classes, instructors, vendors, food vendors, and then they can also come over and check out the bakery that made the marshmallow group come into existence.

[00:31:04] **David Crabill:** Yeah, so you're, you're referring to Mallow Con. So it just had its first event this year. And I'm thinking about CookieCon, you know, like back when cookies, you know, we're, we're talking about what, 15 years ago, 10 years ago now, but You know, back when cookies started to get really popular, then this conference came about and it's been one of the most popular conferences in our industry ever.

[00:31:30] Do you feel like marshmallows are kind of one of the next big things?

[00:31:35] **Wynter Hosier:** You are asking the wrong person. I just know that I love what I do and marshmallows are a part of it. I know that they gain more popularity in my area each year. I know that they gain more popularity in the group, that We have more group members coming and telling us how awesome their sales have been and it's been phenomenal to watch people who didn't even know that homemade marshmallows were a thing.

[00:32:02] Turn around and grow an absolute business that is based fully on making homemade marshmallows.

[00:32:09] **David Crabill:** Well obviously The hot cocoa bomb craze is over, or not completely over, but it's way dead down. Do you use marshmallows in any other ways? Like, Have you been inspired by the group?

[00:32:23] **Wynter Hosier:** Yeah, the uh, brownie bars that I do. Those became popular in the group and I decided that I would try to make them too. And so those have become very popular here at the bakery.

[00:32:38] **David Crabill:** So what is your menu looking like now?

[00:32:42] **Wynter Hosier:** So French macarons are still at the top of the line, and then I have brownies that weigh 12 ounces at a minimum. that are three inches wide, three inches deep, and three inches tall. They're just three inch cubes. They are big, they are fudgy. I've got a fully cooked line of brownies, and then I also have what I refer to as molten, and they are medium rare type brownies.

[00:33:12] So I recommend those to people who like brownie batter more than what they like. And then I have Some that are half the size and those are the ones that I top with the marshmallows. So One of my bestselling ones we talked about earlier, it was the brownie overload. But then I also have one that's just the brownie topped with my signature caramel sauce and then vanilla marshmallow with caramel swirl in. I still do cupcakes and custom cakes. I do cheesecakes. I make cheesecake cakes. So it's a layer of cake, a layer of cheesecake, another layer of cake. We've recently pivoted once again here at the bakery and started offering breakfast items right around the time the school year started up. I've made cinnamon rolls for a year now and those have done really well with my base so we decided to open up the bakery.

[00:34:06] At 8 a. m. four days a week instead of noon five days a week. So now we get a little bit of a breakfast rush. Some days I started with just plain cinnamon rolls and then I switched it to lemon blueberry sweet rolls, and then I added cherry sweet rolls. Now I also do pineapple and pineapple upside down sweet rolls, and I'm sure as Time goes on, I will come up with some other fun flavors to do.

[00:34:31] I really, when I made those pineapple sweet rolls, I really meant to make a strawberry buttercream to put on top of the pineapple filled ones, and that one is gonna, that's gonna make me happy. I don't know how my customers are gonna love it, but I know I am going to drool over it. Every time I make it.

[00:34:48] **David Crabill:** And what is your pricing looking like for these items?

[00:34:54] **Wynter Hosier:** So my standard size brownie is a two inch square and it's about a half an inch tall and those go for four dollars. All of the big bars that are three inches by three inches go for twelve dollars and it doesn't matter what the flavor is, it's just flat pricing so that again, I can have those. Profit leaders and the profit loss items.

[00:35:21] And I can have the give and take between those. The cheesecake slices, they're eight inch cheesecakes that are about five inches tall. I slice them into eight and I sell those for 13. 50 each. If they want a whole tray of the bars, the whole tray sells individually for 144 a piece, but if they buy the whole tray they get it for 100 typically, if it's going to be a wholesale or repeat order.

[00:35:49] The macarons are 3 across the board. I used to offer price bakes when they would buy six or twelve or however many but instead of increasing my price when all of my costs went up, I just got rid of that discount.

[00:36:04] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like the bulk orders decreased when you got rid of the bulk discount?

[00:36:11] **Wynter Hosier:** Absolutely. People, it went from the six pack being my number one amount sold to four being what was purchased. And that was honestly okay with me because when I did that was when I was very close to burnout, when I was working 60 to 80 hours a week and I was drowning. So instead of continuing that, I just raised the prices or kept them the same and got rid of the discounts so that I could decrease demand.

[00:36:45] But now I'm at the point where I need to come up with a whole new set of pricing. I have to initiate shop only pricing so that I can get more customers to come into the storefront and that will be the lowest price available to them anywhere. I'm also working on getting and setting up some wholesale accounts and then my standard pricing that I've been at since 2020 will continue for the events in farmer's markets.

[00:37:16] **David Crabill:** No, you had talked about burnout, working 60 to 80 hours a week. Was that after you had moved into your shop?

[00:37:25] **Wynter Hosier:** Nope, that was in 2019.

[00:37:29] I've never gone back to feeling that overwhelmed. I refuse to allow myself to get overwhelmed.

[00:37:37] **David Crabill:** we're speaking about overwhelm. I do have to ask you about the 1 mac day.

[00:37:44] **Wynter Hosier:** So I do get overwhelmed sometimes. Yeah, um, the dollar mac day. That Started because there's a woman in California, she and I are in a macaron group together, and we follow each other on Instagram, and she told me, once I asked her, I was like, is it really worth it when you do those dollar mac days? She had to put in several different rules, and she would do dollar mac day at two locations at the same time, and she let me know that, yeah, it really, it's wonderful for her that she could count on at least 2, 000.

[00:38:24] a day in just her macaron sales, and she would put several limits on them, like they could only buy x amount of one flavor, you could only come through her line once, you could only buy two dozen macarons total, and I've never put those restrictions on my customers, and so, yeah, the first time I did the dollar macaron day, We'd been open for just over two hours, and I had a woman who was kind of disheartened that she had waited in line for two hours and only had like 12 flavors of macarons to choose from.

[00:39:02] So she was kind of upset, but the person in line behind her, she has been coming to me, no matter where I'm at, in Howard County since 2017, my first year at the Kokomo Market. And When I met her, her husband was still alive and they would come and they would buy a dozen macarons wherever they saw me.

[00:39:22] And her husband passed away. During COVID and she still would always come see me and she would buy six macarons because she didn't have him to share with anymore. Well, She was the next customer after the slightly disgruntled one. And I looked at the cashier that was working with me up front and I was like, do you really think people have been waiting here for two hours?

[00:39:45] And the customer smiled at me and she was like, honey, I got here at 10: 15. We're waiting. And she handed me a card and she ordered her six macarons and she walked out the door and I picked up the card and I walked into the kitchen and one of my best friends was in the kitchen with me and I was like, Steph, she just waited for two hours.

[00:40:10] for six macarons to tell me she was proud of me and to give me a card. And I read the card and I just cried. And my friend Steph, like she

wrapped her arms around me and she was like, yeah, you're doing a good job, kid. And I just remember being so overwhelmed and so grateful and so filled with just, Love that people were waiting for more than two hours to get a cookie from my bakery.

[00:40:39] It was very overwhelming in all the right ways. And All the work leading up to that one and the three cents. Have been overwhelming and they've we've had great turnouts The most recent one was the first one that I didn't have a line wrapped around the block I didn't have a single person that was upset that they didn't get choices that they or they didn't get the selections that they wanted We stayed steady all day long.

[00:41:07] We got the customers in and out in under 20 minutes And we had a balloon arch, we had somebody doing face painting, we did giveaways and prizes, and it was wonderful. Truly, David. Dollar Mac Day is good for my soul. It's definitely a sleep deprivation week or two leading up to it, but it's great for my soul.

[00:41:29] **David Crabill:** So You normally sell your macarons at \$3 a piece. You're selling them at \$1. Are you taking a loss on them?

[00:41:38] **Wynter Hosier:** I'm still not taking a loss on them, even when I'm selling them at a dollar. My profit of course sucks, but not only do they buy the macarons for a dollar and buy me out of them, they also buy everything else that's in the shop. So I can make all of those high profit items and they will buy them too because I've already waited in line for x amount of minutes or hours, so why not just buy everything while they're here?

[00:42:05] So truly, my macaron sales are typically around half of my sales for the day. Because I will make absolutely everything I can make and keep fresh. Until the dollar day. And so when there's, I'm in another Facebook group, it's um, for commercial bakery owners, and you have to be an actual commercial bakery owner.

[00:42:26] And when people are struggling, we all share different ideas. There's another baker that does catter days, Where if you come in and you meow, you get a discount. If you come in with a cat shirt on, you get a different discount. If you come in head to toe dressed as a cat, you get an even higher discount.

[00:42:42] And those bring in customers to her. But My suggestion is to pick one of your items that you can afford to decrease the price on. One of your popular items. And decrease your price to get a discount. The buzz around the

product and bring in people because it does. All of them have been good ticket days.

[00:43:04] **David Crabill:** Now, have you noticed that after a Mac day, your sales go up?

[00:43:11] **Wynter Hosier:** Yes. And so does my walk in traffic too, because people who weren't familiar, I've been, I've had the bakery storefront. Since 2020, we have put the sign up in 2021 and painted it, and the storefront has looked this way since 2021. And I still have people every week who are like, we didn't even know you were here!

[00:43:30] So when I do have that line that wraps around the building and goes down the main It's actually an interstate they see it. So they want to know why. So They're like, we just waited until the line was gone and came back. Or we drove past on Tuesday and you had a line that was wrapped around.

[00:43:47] What was happening here? And so that it does definitely help. It picks up, ticks up on the orders and then walks in.

[00:43:55] **David Crabill:** Now it looks like you don't just sell your own products from your shop, but you allow others to sell there too.

[00:44:03] **Wynter Hosier:** Heck, yes, I do. That was the biggest struggle of starting my business. How am I supposed to grow if I can't afford for somebody to take 30 percent of each sale for me to sell there? So when I opened up the storefront, I reached out to my vendor friends and I was like, Hey, having your products in my bakery is good for me.

[00:44:26] I do not want to cut into your profits. You can decide what you want your pricing to be, and then we can raise it to cover what I'm going to have to pay to the government and what I'm going to have to pay in processing fees. But I, I just want your stuff here so that I can get more foot traffic here.

[00:44:43] And so that you can have more sales. And so I did have several people, before the storefront was open, we'd host pop up events. I would have plant sellers come out here, candle makers, ornament makers, jewelry makers, all kinds of different businesses would come out before the shop opened. and then once the storefront opened, I would have a few people that would come in and do pop ups.

[00:45:07] So If a vendor wants to come in and set up and sell their wares themselves, they can just come in and set up and sell anytime. They just have to reach out to me and I. It has to be somebody that I'm comfortable having in my shop and it has to be a product that I think my customers will be interested in, but I am.

[00:45:23] I'm not trying to charge anybody to come in here and sell. I probably could, but I don't, I don't want to. I want their business to be successful. I want my business to be successful. And having to pay when you're trying to grow your business makes it really hard to enter into the business.

[00:45:42] **David Crabill:** It's interesting. I mean, I'm thinking about it. You know, You let people come into your shop and then you also have this Facebook group where you support all these entrepreneurs and just see this like a thread of community across much of what you do.

[00:45:58] **Wynter Hosier:** Yeah, it's there. You see it. I think that relationships are important. I think that empowering other people is important. I think that If I have the resources and it's not hurting me to help you and it's not draining my energy, then why not? I could have used a helping hand. I have no problems helping other people be successful and feel good.

[00:46:25] I only get to live once, so I might as well do as much as I can while I'm here. I enjoy making people smile and. I look for ways to do it.

[00:46:35] **David Crabill:** So for say a new entrepreneur who is just getting started or thinking about it, what would you recommend?

[00:46:43] **Wynter Hosier:** The very first thing that I would recommend is to know your stuff. You need to learn what body regulates you and what rules you need to follow. And then you need to learn what everybody else is doing and what you can do to set yourself apart. The thing that helped my business What truly helped my business was learning the legislation, because every event that I signed up for told me that in the state of Indiana, everything had to be individually pre packaged and labeled, but everybody read summaries and synopsis, nobody read the legislation where it said that I could package on site.

[00:47:27] As long as I had a placard that had all of my required label information on it. So, before each market, okay, so I don't prepackage anything except for the cheesecakes and my caramel sauce. Everything else is served up when you come in so that I don't have to waste time or money. On repackaging things. I also learned that when I do pre-packaged food, my sales go down.

[00:47:52] Because if I pre packaged, then that limited my customers on what they would pick, or it would make it to where I would have to pick for them.

[00:48:00] I don't know. When they walk up to my booth and they see between 12 and 25 different flavors of macarons, they're more likely to get 5, 6, 10, 1 of each, 2 of each. But if they come up and they see Sixteen boxes that all have the same four flavors of macarons. They're not as enthusiastic, they're not as excited, they don't jump back and forth trying to choose which to get and end up getting both.

[00:48:27] They are just stuck with those four and how many boxes of those four they're gonna get. So Learning the law allowed me to know that, hey, The weather's crap outside, so I can go set up inside this business because I have permission from the owner and the law says I can. You should know what you are doing and what pertains to what you are doing better than the government organization that you're going to for clarification. And I have found that if I go to a new county And I said, hi, I'm so and so. I've been in business for X amount of years and I do this. And the reason I do this is because the legislation says this. Are you familiar with that? Is that how you interpreted it? And Typically they'd be like yeah, I'm not familiar with that legislation at all, but it sounds good.

[00:49:19] Go ahead and do what you're doing. If that's what you've been doing. And so it's. Knowledge is power and it's your responsibility to get it as a new business owner.

[00:49:29] And then you need to go ahead and think about everything that goes into pricing, not just your ingredients. You also need to think about the soap that you use to wash your dishes, the paper towel rolls that you use when you're doing your prepping and your cleaning. You need to think about the sanitizer, your food coloring.

[00:49:53] You need to think about the trips to the grocery store, the time that you spend communicating with the customer.

[00:49:59] So You need to price accordingly and you need to pay yourself and you need to pay your business and that's where profit comes in. Your personal pay and your profit are two different things and it is astounding how many people don't Recognize that when they start their business. I think that If you're going to sell to the public, that you should do it correctly.

[00:50:23] You should have your insurance. You should know what you're legally allowed to do. You should follow what you're legally allowed to do. Please don't sell things that are potentially hazardous. If you don't know all the things that are required to do that legally. I think It's important to protect yourself, to protect your business, to protect your personal assets, and most important, to protect your customers, because without them, you have nothing.

[00:50:50] **David Crabill:** Now you have built your business on macarons essentially, and that has also been a major trend in the last few years. Now, Have you noticed that trends start to drop recently?

[00:51:06] **Wynter Hosier:** Absolutely not. In fact, I have a customer who just placed a macaron tower order and in the past she's rented the towers from me, but this time she was like, honey, I just bought it myself and that told me that she has every intention of getting more towers. actually Two of my most recent corporate orders wanted pretty much a third of the cost of their order to be diverted to macarons.

[00:51:34] **David Crabill:** And you talked about differentiating yourself. Although, As macarons got more popular, right, there were a lot more people doing them in your area, I would assume. So, how were you able to continuously differentiate yourself?

[00:51:49] **Wynter Hosier:** Well first off, I do not freeze my macarons, I do not fill them and freeze them, and I do not freeze them. And then fill them later unless I have a multi day festival or I've got the dollar day coming up. And if I do freeze them, I know how to thaw them without changing the texture. And that's My texture is different from every macaron that I've ever tried. So my flavors and my texture are different. And then the other fun thing is that my macarons are tie dyed.

[00:52:22] I do some of my macaron shells with no food coloring and those are typically my caramel creme brulee. My Fruity Pebbles or my birthday cake, and the Fruity Pebbles gets the cereal sprinkled on top, the birthday cake gets the um, sprinkles on top, or I torch them for like the caramel crème brûlée or s'mores.

[00:52:45] The rest of my macarons? Again, Unless it's a multi day event or the dollar day, or I'll just tie dye. I make tie dye macarons and they are bright and they are fun and they are engaging. The kids see them and they're like, ooh, ooh, ooh cookie, cookie, cookie, and then it brings over the adults and people know

that they're mine because my macarons have been tie dyed for at least the last five years.

[00:53:12] **David Crabill:** Now that you run the shop, do you have employees?

[00:53:17] **Wynter Hosier:** I do. Right now I have one employee. She's been phenomenal. I hired her in to basically just help me organize and come clean up after me, but she worked for me for three weeks and then she was like, okay, I'm ready to do more. And I feel like she's just kind of adopted the bakery because I will come in and she'll have reorganized something to make it more efficient to how I use it.

[00:53:43] She's also gotten just random silly things. that she's seen that the bakery needs and she gets them and I tell her to stop and she does it anyways. She is a retired school janitor and she comes here to work with me every day because she loves it

[00:54:00] one of the things that I've learned is to be quick to hire when you're struggling and to be okay with having to be quick to fire if you've tried. And you've done everything that you can think of to get the person on board with what you need them to do. And if they're just not doing it, you have to be okay firing them.

[00:54:22] And if you don't think that you're going to be okay firing somebody, then you need to reconsider being able to hire somebody. Because if you can't, Put your business above their feelings, then they're going to make the whole thing sink.

[00:54:36] **David Crabill:** And when you say you've tried with someone who's not working, are we talking about like, does that mean you've tried for a number of days? Does that mean you've tried for a number of tasks? Like, How do you know when it's time to let them go?

[00:54:52] **Wynter Hosier:** A combination of both. When there have been processes that they're not following and you have instructed them. And you've corrected them and they continue to do it their own way because it works better for them but costs you time, ingredients, or labor, then it's time to let them go and it doesn't matter, you could give them three times or you could give them six times.

[00:55:17] if they've decided that their way is better than yours because it's more comfortable for them, then it's time to let them go. if you've given them

multiple tasks and they are consistently struggling or failing to meet the expectations.

[00:55:32] Then you also have to be okay with letting them go and just document it. Document the times that you've talked with them, what they've done wrong, what they've done correctly, suggestions that you've made and how it's not gone the way that it should have just to cover your own behind as the business owner and the person who would have to pay unemployment if you are in a state that you'll have to worry about that with.

[00:55:53] **David Crabill:** Well, One of the things that makes it harder to fire is when you've invested a significant amount of time into a person, and then firing them essentially means you have to start over, right?

[00:56:06] **Wynter Hosier:** Yeah, but honestly, I'd rather do it by myself than constantly have to fix everything that I've already told you not to do. I would much rather do it, do it right, and not waste ingredients. And it's really hard to draw that line for a lot of us because people who tend to do what I do like to make people happy.

[00:56:31] We enjoy seeing people smile. So having to be like, yo, you're just not working out here. Really is a challenge and really does suck, but you have to be able to put your business first or you're just gonna drown in the wasted labor and the wasted ingredients and the feelings of why am I letting this happen?

[00:56:53] Why am I not standing up for my business?

[00:56:57] **David Crabill:** Well, obviously your business has grown a lot over the last nine years, and has taken you to many unexpected places. As you look ahead, where do you see it going in the future?

[00:57:07] **Wynter Hosier:** Everywhere I can go with it, I want it to grow. I want it to continue to make people happy for decades.

[00:57:17] **David Crabill:** What's driving you to grow it more?

[00:57:22] **Wynter Hosier:** I want to leave it for my daughter. I want it to be something that she can count on in the back of her mind that will always provide security for her. Throughout life.

[00:57:37] **David Crabill:** As you reflect on your business, why do you love running it so much?

[00:57:44] **Wynter Hosier:** Because I love what I do. I love making new treats. I love having people eat them and tell me, oh my gosh, that is disgusting. Why did you make barbecue marshmallows? Or, holy crap, I didn't know strawberry and Andes mint went together. Or, that's the best dang brownie I have ever put in my mouth. I enjoy it.

[00:58:09] how my customers enjoy and appreciate what I do. It's worth it. All of the late nights, all of the financial insecurity, all of it's worth it when I am truly appreciated for what I do. I get to love what I do and I get to be loved because of what I do. It's phenomenal. Not everybody has that in their life.

[00:58:32] **David Crabill:** Well, Wynter, thank you so much for coming on and sharing all of that with us. Now, If somebody would like to learn more about you, where can they find you, or how can they reach out?

[00:58:45] **Wynter Hosier:** They can just type in Etta's Gooey Goodies in any of the internet search bars, and that will connect them with either my Facebook, my Instagram, or my business website. And All three of those venues, avenues are great ways to reach out to me.

[00:59:05] **David Crabill:** Well, I will also include links to those in the show notes, and Thank you so much for coming on and sharing with us today.

[00:59:11] **Wynter Hosier:** Thank you so much for having me.

[00:59:17] **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/128.

[00:59:27] And if you're enjoying this podcast, please take a quick moment right now and leave me a review on Apple podcasts. It doesn't have to be a long review, but it's truly the best way to support this show and will help others like you find this podcast.

[00:59:39] 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.

[00:59:51] Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.