

# Jondell Lafont-Garcia with Fluff Marshmallow Co.

**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 Jondell Lafont-Garcia.

[00:00:12] But first, I want to tell you about Square Online, which is what Jondell uses for her website. A lot of entrepreneurs still think they need to spend money to get a good website, and that is simply not true anymore.

[00:00:26] So I created a free tutorial that will walk you through how to set up a totally free website in less than one hour. And in case you think free also means cheap, it's actually quite the opposite. I think Square Online is hands down the very best website tool for most cottage food businesses. So, If you want to learn more, you can watch my free tutorial by going to [forrager.com/website](http://forrager.com/website).

[00:00:53] All right, I have Jondell on the show today. She lives in Pflugerville, Texas and sells marshmallows with her cottage food business, Fluff Marshmallow Co.

[00:01:04] Homemade marshmallows are trending right now, but Jondell has been making them for 11 years. After many years of making them just for friends and family, she joined a marshmallow Facebook group and got lots of encouragement to start selling them.

[00:01:20] A couple of months later, she started her cottage food business and found immediate success whenever and wherever she sold. She is now considered one of the foremost experts in this burgeoning niche and has been very involved in a new national conference for marshmallow makers.

[00:01:38] In this episode, Jondell shares why homemade marshmallows are much different than store bought, whether marshmallows are the next big trend, and how she's built her business despite facing a major personal challenge.

[00:01:52] And with that, let's jump right into this episode.

[00:01:55] Welcome to the show, Jondell nice to

[00:01:59] have you here.

[00:02:00] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** thank you for having me.

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

[00:02:09] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** It's kind of interesting because I like to tell people that I don't like marshmallows. I never have. And so, About 11 years ago, I had this really strong craving for a marshmallow, but I didn't just want to go to the store. I consider myself a pretty good cook.

[00:02:28] So I was like, if I can cook, I could probably make a marshmallow. So I looked up a recipe online and decided to make some almond marshmallows with dark chocolate and toasted coconut. And I had no idea. Anything About like sugar science and I just kind of whipped up that marshmallow. And For seven years, I actually made marshmallows just for friends and family, just as a hobby.

[00:02:58] And I'm not a baker. I hate baking. I think that's stressful. So it was kind of odd that I was making marshmallows and I would just post on my personal social media when I make marshmallows in different flavors and people really started asking. If I would sell. And so in December, 2020, I actually joined a marshmallow making Facebook group and I started posting pictures of my marshmallows and my recipes, and they were really encouraging about selling.

[00:03:32] And so I decided in February of 2021, just to try it out, I thought , It could be something that was hopefully not stressful and just like added some fun to my life at that point. And so in February, I just took the leap and decided to start selling.

[00:03:49] **David Crabill:** So this was totally random, like you just had a craving one day, and that's how this all started.

[00:03:58] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Yes. I never planned to sell marshmallows. This was not in my journey at all. I'm a mental health professional. And so I never planned to make sweets and sell them. It was just, I just kind of fell into it.

[00:04:13] **David Crabill:** It's so fascinating. So, you mentioned that, this Facebook group was pretty instrumental. I think that's, uh, Marshmallow Making Madness. Is the group that you're referring to there, correct?

[00:04:27] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Yes, that's correct.

[00:04:29] **David Crabill:** You don't know this, but we just had Wynter on the show so she's the one who started that group, right?

[00:04:35] So that's it, I just want to make that correlation for those who are listening. But, um, we go back to the beginning of this journey. You were making the marshmallows for friends and family, but were people telling you from the first year, from the beginning, that you should start selling them?

[00:04:52] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** I remember bringing them, I'd bring them to like holidays. With my friends and family. And they would say like, you could totally sell these. And I would laugh because, you know, it's friends and family. So you'd think, you know, they're just encouraging in general.

[00:05:08] And I made the almond marshmallows probably for at least a year or two, and I didn't make any other flavors. And then when I started making other flavors, then I started getting more and more people on my personal Facebook or Instagram saying like, do you sell these?

[00:05:24] Can you sell these to me? And I'm such a rule follower that I was like, absolutely not. You know, I don't have any business permits or anything like that. And then it just coincided that I started making more flavors and then I joined Marshmallow Making Madness

[00:05:40] I actually have a twin sister who's been really instrumental in this as well because she will come up with flavors and she'll say, Hey, you should make this or you should make that. so I'd say, okay. And then we'd make some different flavors.

[00:05:53] And then of course I'd post it for my friends and family. I'd give it to my really close friends and family. So it was really just the people closest to me that I got to try them. So then other people were like, Hey, I want to try that too.

[00:06:06] **David Crabill:** It's interesting that you said that you don't like to bake, that is stressful to you, but you do like to make marshmallows. So what's the difference for you?

[00:06:15] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** When I first started making marshmallows, I didn't know that there was so much sugar science involved. It wasn't until I joined Marshmallow Making Madness that I started. It was about seven years

into my journey that I learned about all the sugar science and how stressful it maybe should be.

[00:06:32] And so with baking, my sister loves to bake. And so I know all of the measurements have to be so precise I don't like that. I like to cook because I can throw things here and there.

[00:06:45] But for whatever reason, I didn't. I just don't know why I didn't make that connection until I joined the group where people were really having trouble or stressing and saying, my marshmallows aren't working.

[00:06:57] You know, What am I doing wrong? And then these experts would come in and talk about all this sugar science. I was like, Oh wow. I never thought about that. So I just didn't make that connection that it had to be so precise, especially because over the years I would just throw things in and like, hope it worked.

[00:07:14] And not stressed about it. so I don't know. I just didn't make that connection.

[00:07:19] **David Crabill:** Well, You're the first person who's been on the show that focuses solely on marshmallow products and the sugar science thing isn't something I've really learned about before. I'm just curious, like when you say sugar science, what does that mean? At a very high level,

[00:07:36] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Yeah. So basically when you make your sugar syrup on the stove, it has to cook to a certain temperature and you have to have certain ingredients like an invert sugar so that the marshmallows don't recrystallize within a couple of days. When you add it to the gelatin, the gelatin has to be in cold water and I will say I'm from South Louisiana. I'm Cajun and my family makes things like pralines and fudge. We would use the like softball method where we're if we're making pralines like with the sugar, we're literally putting some of it in a mug with cold water to see when it makes a softball.

[00:08:15] And that's how we knew it was ready. And then I never made the connection with marshmallows that when I was bringing it to a temperature like 240 degrees, that's what I was doing was going to that softball stage. That's basically what sugar science is, making sure it gets to the right temperature, making sure you have the right ingredients, so it's not recrystallizing.

[00:08:35] But again, because I don't bake or really make candy on a regular basis, I hadn't made all those connections until years later.

[00:08:43] **David Crabill:** so The first few years were you using a candy thermometer?

[00:08:49] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** I was using a very cheap candy thermometer and I would just click it to 240 and it always worked. I didn't question anything. I just did it.

[00:09:00] **David Crabill:** Yeah. So I don't think you know this, but I run. Fudge business. That's my cottage food business. And so I remember when I was growing up making fudge with my dad and we would use that softball method all the time to make the fudge. But now of course I use a candy thermometer. It's, Way more reliable.

[00:09:22] So I do understand what you're talking about with sugar science. Now, you said that you are a rule follower. And so you were just telling people like, no, I don't want to sell it. But, even back when you started this business, Texas had a cottage food law. So you could have started this business, correct?

[00:09:42] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Yeah. So that's why In December 2020, after I joined Marshmallow Making Madness, I looked into what it would take to start a cottage food business. And it's very easy. By February I was up and running. I did all my paperwork in January. And then a month later, I started my cottage food business because it's actually pretty easy in Texas.

[00:10:03] **David Crabill:** Do you wish you had started the business perhaps years earlier?

[00:10:10] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** I'm not sure, because I worked in mental health and so I've had some pretty stressful jobs in the past and I don't know that I could have managed having a cottage food business on top of the mental health work I was doing. The work that I do now, I actually, Get off at like 4:30. I'm not working nights and weekends.

[00:10:33] And So it's a little bit easier to have the cottage food business now.

[00:10:38] **David Crabill:** Yeah, so you said you started this at the beginning of 2021. That's obviously right in the middle of the pandemic. So Did the pandemic change your work? In such a way that it made this business possible.

[00:10:51] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Yeah. So I started working from home in March of 2020. And so that definitely made it easier because I didn't have about an hour drive into Austin and back. So Being able to work from home really

helped. And When I started the cottage food business, what I did was I would post pre-sales on social media, and then people would pre order, and then they would stop by my house, they'd come on my porch and literally just pick up their items on the day that I held the pop up.

[00:11:24] they would text me when they were there, I'd put their items on a table on my porch. They'd pick them up. I'd sanitize and be ready for the next person was kind of a different model than. Doing markets or anything like that because of when I started, being able to work from home, it made it possible.

[00:11:44] And I felt like I was in a good place that I could sell. Whereas in previous years I wasn't working at home. So it would have been much harder because I had driven into Austin and that was just exhausting in and of itself.

[00:11:57] **David Crabill:** So while you were making these for, you know, seven years for family and friends, and obviously experimenting a lot with different, um, marshmallows and flavors, I assume, Were you posting all this stuff on social media?

[00:12:16] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Yes, I was just posting on my personal, social media, which was good because when I started the cottage business, I actually had a customer base. Ready to go. And so these were all the people who had been wanting to try the marshmallows, but weren't like my immediate family or my best friends who were getting to try them.

[00:12:38] it was just people who had been seeing them and wanting to try them. So as soon as I started selling, I would sell out at all of my pre-sales because I already had that customer base built in.

[00:12:48] **David Crabill:** So let's just assume that you had given stuff out to family and friends, but you never actually built up your social media presence on the side. And so, come the end of 2021, you're in this Facebook group, people are saying, hey, you should start selling this. You don't have that social media presence to kind of jump off of. How do you think it would have gone,

[00:13:11] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Ooh, uh, I think that would have been a hard year to start had I not already had The customer base, because people weren't doing markets back then, which is. how I eventually grew my customer base was by going to markets when markets started up again. So I think that would have been a very hard year to start if I didn't already have people on my social media who were willing to buy, they'd post on their social media, they'd



tell their friends and family, and that's how I initially grew was by word of mouth.

[00:13:45] **David Crabill:** So you feel like your business, once you start it, it jumps right away. Like you didn't have any issues getting yourself out there.

[00:13:55] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** No, I feel really lucky in that it did take off basically by word of mouth. And then I started getting invited to markets. I didn't reach out to markets initially. I didn't apply to markets, but then I'd have people reach out. To me, which I felt really grateful for, But yeah, I think that was just really helpful is having that word of mouth.

[00:14:17] **David Crabill:** And then How long was it after you started your business that you actually started doing a market?

[00:14:25] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** I did pre orders, for at least a year. I had posted at one point in an Austin foodie group just to expand my reach and let people know that I do custom orders and that I do these pre orders. And someone reached out to me. It must've been June or July. It was a summer month and invited me to their neighborhood Halloween event.

[00:14:53] And that was the first market I did, which ended up being really fun. And so That's how I got into, saying yes to markets because I did this. I want to say a smaller neighborhood event, but it actually went really well. It made me feel good about doing markets.

[00:15:09] **David Crabill:** What was that first market like?

[00:15:12] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** I actually was really anxious about it. I didn't at the time know how to set up for a market or anything like that. I had joined some Facebook groups where people showed their market setups.

[00:15:25] I knew I should have height, so, so I bought a couple of items where I could put my marshmallows, like marshmallow towers. Figuring out pricing for a market was interesting, knowing that I was going to be there for several hours. I wanted to make sure my price reflected, getting paid for my time as well, it was a really cool experience cause I was on the outskirts or like on the outside of the perimeter.

[00:15:50] And I had people at some point coming up to me and saying, Hey, are you the marshmallow person? And I was like, yes. And they said, they're talking about you by the hot dog stand. And I thought that was the funniest

thing ever. People were getting hot dogs and telling people, Hey, you gotta go get some marshmallows.

[00:16:06] And so it actually went really well. I was. pleased with how I did. I had a couple of marshmallows left over. And so we had some neighbors with kids, so we just popped over there and gave them what was left over. It wasn't much. After that, I was like, that was really fun. I had a lot of fun. so then when other markets reached out, I felt more comfortable saying, yeah, I think I can do a market,

[00:16:30] **David Crabill:** Now, what is the shelf life for these marshmallows like?

[00:16:35] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Once I make them, they're good for about three to four weeks before they crystallize. I think they are best within that first week. I do think they start to dry out after a couple weeks, so I really like them within the first week, but I've eaten them and people have eaten them, you know, a month later, and they're good.

[00:16:56] Besides just plain marshmallows, I make marshmallow brownie bars, for those, you want to eat those within like Two weeks because the brownie starts to dry out before the marshmallow crystallizes. So that one is a little bit, I would say, shorter shelf life if you want it as fresh as possible.

[00:17:14] I've actually tested for the The s'mores bars that I make, so it's a marshmallow with chocolate and graham cracker crust.

[00:17:21] I've eaten those a month later and I thought they were just as good. I don't know if the marshmallow keeps the graham cracker crunchy, but soft. It was just really good. so I think those are about the same as, as just a plain marshmallow.

[00:17:35] **David Crabill:** So, When you go to a market, you don't have to be too worried about selling out, right? because you could use your product again, like, a week later.

[00:17:45] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** If I did that many markets, yeah, I don't typically, I wasn't doing more than like one, maybe two markets. A month, for me just with work and then I have a chronic trigeminal nerve condition that has been sort of interesting to manage with this business. So If I don't sell a lot, I will try to sell them on my page. But I've been pretty good about it. Asking how many people they have at a market and then planning how much to bring. And



then If I have like just a little bit left over, I still appreciate my family and friends giving me feedback for those seven years.

[00:18:19] So they get leftovers if there's not a lot that I don't sell.

[00:18:23] **David Crabill:** Can you share a little bit more about the nerve condition you have? It sounds like this Impacts your business to some degree.

[00:18:31] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Oh yeah, absolutely. So, When I started the business at the time, I thought it was actually, like a TMJ condition. I was at that point about to have surgery. And I thought, Oh, as soon as I have surgery, I won't be in pain anymore and it'll be great. So starting this business, no problem.

[00:18:51] I'll be pain free soon. My pain actually started in March of 2020 after I had been really sick in February, 2020, like with the virus. so with the trigeminal nerve, it runs. And that's within like three places in your face. And so for me, it is constant like burning pain in my face, like from my ear to my mouth.

[00:19:14] The problem is when I do anything physical, it'll increase the pain.

[00:19:18] And so I realized I like making the marshmallows and then markets, Really increasing my pain. So like at this moment, I have taken a hiatus from markets and I'm doing mostly individual orders, custom orders. So people will order for birthdays and different events, pool parties, things like that.

[00:19:38] And then I will do it. Pop ups, like how I started, I will do pop ups here and there for people to order, and then come to my house. So like those pre orders, I'm doing that again. And it's a little bit more manageable because until you do a market, I feel like you don't realize how, Much work it is to get there and set up the tent and set up your table and then Standing all day because you don't want to sit down. You want to stand to make sure people see you and so it's just standing all day and then talking all day like for me talking is something that increases the pain.

[00:20:11] So I have to be mindful of time there for four hours and talking and then taking down the tent. And Before that I'll make marshmallows for a week before a market. And it's, you know, I work all day and I only make marshmallows after work. it ends up being a lot physically. So I did markets and I just kind of went on hiatus.

[00:20:31] In February of this year for markets. So I did markets for quite a while until I realized, okay, I'm pushing myself too much and I need to take a break from the market. will sometimes do a holiday market if it pops up. Because people usually want marshmallows around the holidays. So I am trying to be flexible with myself and knowing that it doesn't have to be, no, I'm never going to do a market, but thinking about what's going to work best so that I'm not increasing my pain. And then also I love making marshmallows for people. So I still sometimes want to go to the market. And I feel like the holidays have been a really good time to do that.

[00:21:10] **David Crabill:** Now you said that the beginning of your business, the first year went great. You know, Every time you'd post, you would sell out of your marshmallows. So Do you feel like you actually have needed markets to grow the business?

[00:21:26] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** The markets definitely helped because it grew my customer base outside of just people I knew or people they knew that word of mouth was really helpful at first. But With the markets, I've been able to expand the customer base and so things change in people's lives. They're not always able to buy sweets and things like that.

[00:21:46] And then Sometimes people are like, okay, I've had about a hundred marshmallows at this point, I need a break. and so having a wider audience that I can. The market has been helpful too. So that when I am doing pre orders and things like that, I feel like I am still making money for my time.

[00:22:06] **David Crabill:** So when you're dealing with a new customer at a market, I mean, I feel like marshmallows are still kind of a new thing, right? Are people like, you know, what are you doing? Is there any education involved there?

[00:22:20] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Yeah. I feel like for some people, like some people will come up and they're like, Oh my God, I love marshmallows. And then I can say, okay, have you had a homemade one? Because it's so much better than the ones you get in the store. And so Those people are really easy. Customers are like, give me several, you know, they'll taste one, they'll come back and get more.

[00:22:40] And then there are a lot of people that I have to educate on like a homemade marshmallow. A lot of people will say, I didn't know you could make marshmallows. And then there's of course, people like me who would say, I don't like marshmallows.

[00:22:53] those are the most fun people for me, because then I get to say, I don't like marshmallows either. Let me tell you about homemade marshmallows and why they're different.

[00:23:01] and saying, Hey, they're not as dry. They're not as powdery. They taste different. You can have all different flavors. It's not just that very minimal vanilla flavor in a homemade marshmallow. And I rarely, unless somebody asked for it, I rarely make vanilla. And people listening who make marshmallows, I'm sorry, people will say, nope, a traditional vanilla marshmallow is the best.

[00:23:25] And I say, absolutely not. I like every other flavor. And so I think that's where the education comes in too, is saying like, Hey, it's not just vanilla. Like You can have all these other flavors. flavors And I've made over a hundred different flavors. If it's somebody who doesn't like marshmallows, I'll try to recommend the flavor that I like the best that month or something like a brownie bar or a s'mores bar because you have something that's familiar with it, right? Like you have a brownie with it. If they like brownies, then I feel like that's the one to go with because it's not just a marshmallow.

[00:24:00] If I do a s'mores bar and I roast it, I feel like that one's a little bit for people who say they don't like marshmallows, like that roasted marshmallow is just so good.

[00:24:08] One way that I explain to people, too, is like, getting a homemade chocolate chip cookie versus going to the store and buying, like, a package of cookies, like, the ones on the shelf.

[00:24:22] So, that's one way to educate people too,

[00:24:23] **David Crabill:** For someone who's brand new to this, what is the process like for making marshmallows?

[00:24:31] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** So you make a sugar syrup on the stove, so sugar, an invert sugar like corn syrup, I use corn syrup, some salt and some water, and then in a mixer bowl, you put some gelatin, some water, I personally put extracts.

[00:24:48] In my water with my gelatin, cause I like to cook kind of the alcohol flavor off. So once the sugar syrup heats up to 240 degrees, you pour that sugar syrup over the gelatin, stir it all together until the gelatin dissolves. And Then you turn on your mixer and you whip it up and it will go from a very clear

liquid and it turns into beautiful, white, fluffy, Marshmallow, and that is my favorite part, which is why I named my business Marshmallow Co.

[00:25:21] And then once it's fully whipped up, you put it into an oiled pan. I like to use glass pans. I use a nine by 13 and then you let it set up. You can let it set up for four hours. To overnight, I prefer letting it set up for at least 12 hours because then they're much easier to cut. As you can imagine Marshmallows are very sticky, so I'll take a knife and oil it up and then cut the marshmallows into the size that I want and then you have to dust them with flour.

[00:25:51] Powdered sugar or powdered sugar and cornstarch mixture, which is what I use so that they're not Super sticky all over the place to get into your bags. I like to get as much of that dusting mix off as possible. I think that's really important if you're going to sell That they look really nice and not full of that dusting mixture.

[00:26:12] You know, I want to present a clean image in terms of the marshmallow. So I take as much dusting off as possible. And then you have your marshmallow.

[00:26:22] **David Crabill:** I'm thinking about how marshmallows at the store generally are a very inexpensive item. What is the pricing looking like for your homemade marshmallows? How do you market those and price them out?

[00:26:35] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** I will say I am on the higher end. Um, I've increased my prices over the years, after doing all my math and realizing the amount of time it takes. And I really do value my time. I think that's important. when I'm making just marshmallow cubes, I will sell two in a package for 5.

[00:26:57] And that includes my sales tax. So I'll back out the taxes. I will get 40 marshmallows from a batch. So that's 22 packs and it sounds like that's a hundred dollars per batch, but that's not really what it is. When you think about ingredients and labels and your business liability insurance, you know, like when you account for everything, it's really. Not as much as what it seems like. and then for my bars, I get 16 bars per batch and I sell those at 7. Baked goods in Texas. you don't have to charge sales tax. So that's just a flat 7 that I get. I know I'm on the higher end, but I feel like I've really built my brand.

[00:27:40] I present my marshmallows in a very specific way. I like to think of them as a gourmet luxury product. At this point, I haven't had any problems with the price. And so I feel like I'm at a good price for me and a good price for

customers for the product that they're getting, because I will always make sure that I'm using good quality ingredients. I'm really big on presentation.

[00:28:05] I'll make them pretty. I'll add, If I add a topping to a marshmallow, it's, you don't just get like two pieces of a topping. I'll give you, The whole thing is covered in like chocolate chips or whatever it is. And so I try to make sure my customers are getting their money's worth too.

[00:28:19] **David Crabill:** So You haven't faced. Resistance to your pricing.

[00:28:24] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** No, not at this point. Like I realized with my bars at 7, I am at the point where people are hesitant but will still buy. So that's to me like a good price. I was selling them for \$5 and I would sell out and people would buy them with no hesitation. So When I put it up to 7, you get that, Hmm, I'm not sure.

[00:28:49] And they'll say, okay, I'll purchase it. And so I feel like that's a good indicator that I don't think I can increase the bars anymore. And I think For the two packs of cubes, 5, people are like, ah, it's just 5, that's just good. Price for a lot of things.

[00:29:06] **David Crabill:** So when you say two marshmallows for 5 and, maybe most people are only familiar with what marshmallows look like in a store, like how big are the marshmallows or how big are we talking here?

[00:29:19] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** So my marshmallows are about, one and a half inches by one and a half inches like cubes and about one and a quarter inches high. not like jumbo marshmallows, but they are, I think, a nice size. I like to remind people that it's not just a vanilla marshmallow. So it's going to have lots of flavor in it.

[00:29:39] I usually have some sort of topping on it or it's rolled in something. I don't like to sell just plain marshmallows. So it's not just a vanilla marshmallow. like Sometimes I'll make my own, it's called a berry Chantilly marshmallow. Cause again, I'm from Louisiana. So it's more of a vanilla and cream cheese flavored marshmallow with white chocolate drizzle and then freeze dried berries on top.

[00:30:03] Or like cookie butter, so it'll be a brown sugar based marshmallow with cookie butter swirled in those biscoff cookies, either rolled inside or on top with the cookie butter.

[00:30:15] **David Crabill:** You said that you've made over a hundred different flavors at this point, do you feel like that has been helpful for you in a business sense? Are you just making the new flavors because they're fun?

[00:30:28] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** It definitely helps in a business sense because I try to make different flavors every month when I'm selling it keeps people interested, right? If I just made the same flavor every month, at some point people would say, Oh, okay, I had that flavor a bunch of times. So if I'm making different flavors, then people are like, Oh, I really want to try that one.

[00:30:49] And because of my business model, they know it's not going to come around again, maybe ever. Sometimes I just keep making new flavors or it might be like a year before it comes around again. When people start asking me like, Hey, I want you to make this flavor again. And I get a lot of requests. I'm like, okay, I'll make that flavor again.

[00:31:06] and then it also just keeps it fun for me. I get bored easily. I'll get more energy to make marshmallows when I'm thinking of a new flavor. It makes me excited because I want to try it too. So It keeps it interesting for me. It keeps it interesting for customers. And then if a customer doesn't like something, Somebody's like, Oh, I really don't like cookie butter.

[00:31:27] So this month they might not buy from me, but next month I will make mint chocolate chips and they really like mint chocolate chips. then they're buying that month. And so It definitely helps with keeping my customer base interested, you know, making sure I'm appealing to lots of different customers.

[00:31:43] And then for me, it keeps it interesting too.

[00:31:45] **David Crabill:** And how many flavors are you offering per month?

[00:31:49] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** if it's a busier month, I do like four flavors. some months, like if I've done a big market, I've offered up to 11 flavors, but most often it's three to four flavors in a month.

[00:32:06] **David Crabill:** And you don't have any staple flavors like that people can know, like I can get this flavor from her consistently.

[00:32:14] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** No, I know some people like cookie shops and stuff will have like one flavor that's consistent and then they have different ones and I just, I don't, there is one flavor, like a strawberry cheesecake bar, like



with graham cracker crust that I make, and I make that one more often because people ask for it all the time.

[00:32:35] So I don't have it every month, but I have it regularly enough. If people want it though, they can get it in a few months because it's the one flavor that I have people asking for quite often.

[00:32:48] **David Crabill:** Do you find that Your sales go up at the end of the month, like when people know they're not going to be able to get this again for a long time.

[00:32:57] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** So I only usually offer it for one weekend. So I'm not making marshmallows all the time. Just because of work and then trying to manage my pain. I have to have lots of time. Rest. So I'm usually only offering marshmallows once a month.

[00:33:13] **David Crabill:** And Do you put limits on how much people can buy, or do you just take as many orders as you can and then allocate the time to make them?

[00:33:23] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** So I know what my limit is usually. like, I'll think about where my pain is like that month, like, I'll see which weekend I plan to make them. And I usually will offer anywhere from like six to eight batches. And I put it on my Squarespace and people can buy them.

[00:33:43] And if I sell out of them, then I know. At least I know I can make that many. So I know that I'll be okay making that. I don't want to put them up and then people order 11 batches worth of marshmallows and I burn myself out and I'm in pain. So I know what my limit is and I do that. But then if I have a market, like I did this mermaid festival one year and I had help thankfully, we made like 26 batches of marshmallows. That was a lot more than I normally make, but I know if I make six to eight batches, I feel good about the amount of time I spent, how much money I made, and what I'm able to offer my customers.

[00:34:24] **David Crabill:** I just whipped out the calculator. It's 26 batches. And you said earlier, you did 40 in a batch. That's it. Over a thousand marshmallows right there.

[00:34:35] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** It was a lot. It was the most I've ever made. I worked 50 hours outside of my 40 hour job that week. And then my sister

liked it, she helped a lot with packaging and labeling. because I do the cutting and things like that. So I think she worked 40 hours.

[00:34:51] It was like 90 hours that we worked outside of our day jobs. And it was just. I don't think I'll ever do that again. a little bit much for me. I really am a micro business. I mean, people say they're small businesses. I like to say I'm a micro business because I do this not to pay my bills.

[00:35:08] Right now it really is. I like to use the extra money for travel and to buy different things that I like.

[00:35:16] **David Crabill:** Is the money what motivates you to keep running the business? Considering that, it's caused some issues with the pain you deal with, et cetera.

[00:35:28] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** I have a lot of fun with it. So, I mean, extra money is always nice. Like, I just use marshmallow money to go To the Caribbean. So that was absolutely a good motivator. I planned some sales and I wasn't sure if I was going to have it or not, but I did, and that was definitely a motivator to be able to travel, but it's also, I just have so much fun making them.

[00:35:49] And then when people really like them and I get good feedback, it just feels really good, like for them to say like, I really want this flavor. It makes me feel really good that I've created something that they really like and that they're requesting.

[00:36:02] So that's definitely part of it too.

[00:36:04] **David Crabill:** So considering that, money is not the big motivator for you, what has caused you to push up towards the higher pricing end of things?

[00:36:17] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** you really have to do your math, cause sometimes people are just thinking, okay, well marshmallow ingredients, it's sugar, it's some corn syrup, it's some gelatin, it's really not that expensive to make them, but then when you think about your labels and, packaging and your, Insurance, paper towels, like all your overhead, that adds up and I think people don't realize like how much it actually costs to make a marshmallow when you include everything else.

[00:36:46] And then my time is so important to me because I do work a full time job. I do have this pain. So in order for me to Make them, then it has to be worth my time. If I was getting paid, like 8 an hour for my time. it's not worth it.

[00:37:01] I'm exchanging an hour of my life or 10 hours of my life to do this. And so I want it to be. Worth it for me too, because I feel like everybody deserves to get paid fairly for their time.

[00:37:14] **David Crabill:** Have you ever considered trying to move away from the full time job and focus on this business full time?

[00:37:24] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** There was a time I considered it, but it is. Physically so demanding. And I think other cottage business owners know this, like any type of baking or candy making, like it's just so physical. And If I didn't have my trigeminal nerve condition, I think it would be different. But having that, I just know like at this time of my life, there's a treatment developed, it just would be impossible. I wouldn't be able to make enough money to survive with the amount of hours I'd be able to work.

[00:38:00] **David Crabill:** So if you didn't have the pain to deal with, you think you would potentially turn it into a full time business?

[00:38:08] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Yeah, I think I had thought about it. Before, cause it sounds fun, but, right now just talking to other cottage food businesses in the area, like, this is probably happening across the United States. Like People aren't having extra money right now to buy, you know, our stuff is often just like luxury products.

[00:38:31] Like you don't need a cookie or a marshmallow to survive. So I know like A lot of cottage food. businesses here have struggled. There have been lots of bakeries that have gone out of business that have storefronts and people are really struggling. So I've thought about it before, but I think it would be something to really, really, really, really think about hard just because of the nature of where things are right now, seeing so many cottage food businesses and bakeries close.

[00:39:01] **David Crabill:** Yeah, it's interesting that you say that. I mean, from my perspective, I've been in this industry for over a decade and, I'd say, you know, the pandemic brought a lot of focus on this industry. People had more time to scroll through social media and discover these, you know, these businesses. So we saw this big boon during the pandemic, which led to a lot more cottage food businesses than ever.

[00:39:27] And I think we're right now just kind of getting back to what it was before, you know, kind of getting back to normal. And so we're getting back to kind of pre pandemic demand, but I still think, you know, just like before the pandemic, you know, Many businesses were very successful and, just looking at your business, I could see you being pretty successful probably, but You never

[00:39:49] now, you've been making marshmallows for 11 years. From your perspective, like how, the marshmallow trend Shifted or changed over that time.

[00:40:02] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** I'm pretty amazed at how many people are making marshmallows now. When I first started making marshmallows, I didn't know anybody. Who made marshmallows?

[00:40:13] And then now, especially joining the Facebook group, I see a lot more people making marshmallows and then there's also, I think several marshmallow makers in the general area where I am, we're all sort of far enough away from each other because we're in the Austin area but there's Several of us.

[00:40:32] There's at least four that I'm thinking of and When I started, I didn't even know that I could buy marshmallows from anybody because I probably would have instead of making them. Then I am in this Facebook group and I hear people saying, Oh, like we're in the same area or we're in the same area. I think even Australia used to have like one big marshmallow maker.

[00:40:53] And now they have a ton of marshmallow makers so it definitely has boomed. I think it's. Like macarons boomed for a while and macarons are still really popular, but I think marshmallows are what macarons were a few years ago.

[00:41:06] **David Crabill:** So do you think right now, like marshmallows are becoming the next big thing?

[00:41:12] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** From what I can see, yes, I think so.

[00:41:16] but I see a lot of cookie makers and stuff like that, like saying, Hey, we want to expand or, you know, hot cocoa bomb makers. They want to expand. They want to use homemade marshmallows and their hot cocoa bombs to set themselves apart from other people who make those items.

[00:41:31] **David Crabill:** Yeah. I mean, It's interesting to see the trends and I would actually agree. Like I've seen this marshmallow thing popping up more and more. I'd put it kind of next to the freeze dried food trend. Has been a big

one, as, you know, one thing kind of goes away, like another thing comes forward. So like a few years ago we were having the jumbo cookie trend that was humongous and it's still big.

[00:41:58] Like you said, macarons are big. Decorated sugar cookies are a big one. But it does seem like we're kind of moving away from those cookie trends like this, I don't know, sugar science maybe, uh, trend. I'm not sure how to describe it, but, It's just interesting to see those trends and I, I can definitely see the marshmallow trend coming.

[00:42:21] and Like I said, you're the first marshmallow focused cottage food business I've had on the show. I'm sure you're not going to be the last, so it'll be interesting to see how it grows over the next few years.

[00:42:32] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Yeah. There's some good ones out there. I always have so much fun talking to other marshmallow makers especially when all they do is marshmallows. Cause a lot of people it's like adding on, right. Because they are doing jumbo cookies, but maybe they're not selling as much because other people are doing that.

[00:42:47] So they'll add marshmallows to it. But to have people that make just marshmallows, I think it's just interesting to hear different people's stories because the way I got started was totally random. And so I'm always interested to hear the way that other people found out about making homemade marshmallows and how they got into it.

[00:43:05] **David Crabill:** Now speaking about connecting with other marshmallow makers, I did want to ask you about Mallow Con. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

[00:43:15] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Yeah. So Mallow Con actually came about. Last year. So For several years, people in the Marshmallow Making Madness group had said, Oh, we, we should really get together. Last year, someone said, Hey, I'll plan something. I'll plan Just a gathering for us all to get together in North Carolina. And so There was a lot of excitement around that.

[00:43:38] And she asked me if I would go and teach a couple. Classes or demos, like for my recipe, teaching people, you know, how to make marshmallows. A lot of people in the group use my recipe. And so I was like, yeah, you know, I'll go out there and teach a couple of classes. And Then it turned into something much bigger in terms of people, like wanting more

classes or different types of classes and asking if we would have vendors and things like that.

[00:44:03] So. Mallocon Last year was still small, you know, it was our first one, but we had people from the group come out, and we had vendors. We had a full day of classes and demos. I was able to teach a class on how to make my basic recipe and the way that I do my colorful swirls on top of my marshmallow.

[00:44:25] So people have been wanting to know how to do that and it's, I've posted some videos, but it's a lot easier to explain in person. And so I got to teach that, I And then I taught a class on how I cut my marshmallows because people were interested in my technique for that, because it can be really hard if you're not using a ruler to get really even cuts.

[00:44:47] And so I was able to teach a couple of classes and We had a really good time. We had 60 people last year, and that was a lot of fun.

[00:44:58] We got to meet a lot of people that we had been talking to in the group. I had a lot of fun meeting people. And then, so This year we're going to actually do it. Two days of MallowCon and we're hoping to have even more people, more classes. There are people in the group who do some really cool things with marshmallows, like pipe them into characters and flowers.

[00:45:21] And so we're hoping You know, to get people who do that type of marshmallowing to come and teach some classes and just to connect kind of outside of the virtual world.

[00:45:31] **David Crabill:** Are you familiar with Cookie Con?

[00:45:35] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Yes, they actually had it in Round Rock this year, which is just a few miles from my house.

[00:45:42] **David Crabill:** So Cookie Con was like, you know, became the biggest thing over the past decade because There was this massive influx of cookie makers, and I was just wondering, like, do you see that potential for Molokan someday? I think it could get there. I actually have never been to a cookie con, but I see pictures all the time and the things that I like is that they, I see they have classes, and then I really like that people will bring stuff and trade. And We actually did that last year. People traded, everybody brought marshmallows to trade.



[00:46:18] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** But when I see people that go to Cookie Con and the energy, and the experiences that they're having and people are really excited to meet other people that they've connected with online. And I hope we could have that, like, even if we can't have the thousands and thousands and thousands of people that go to Cookie Con, cause I guess cookies will probably always be more popular than marshmallows, but I would love to have that same energy at MallowCon.

[00:46:45] Like I would love for it to grow, but then still feel like we're going to like a family reunion or something.

[00:46:51] **David Crabill:** So you taught some classes at Molokan, do you do any teaching outside of that?

[00:47:00] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** That's my goal for this year. So, um, In my mental health job, right, I do training. And so I love to train. I love that type of work. And so I really want to do more classes. so My goal is currently, before MallowCon this year, or this next year, is to record a class. At least one class I want to do is basic. How do I make my recipe class?

[00:47:27] Because that's probably what I'm asked about most often. And so it would be a virtual class that I could put online for people to register and download . And then I also want to do classes on how to make layered marshmallows because People find that really hard. Marshmallow sets up really fast. You don't have a lot of time to work with it at all.

[00:47:48] And so if you want to make two colors in one batch or two flavors in one batch and layer them, I want to do a class for that. I want to do a class on making bars. So I have a lot of ideas for classes. I would like to do more of that. Given my chronic pain, I feel like I can make a class virtual and then put it online.

[00:48:07] I only have to do the class once, so it's not like I'm doing it over and over and over again. And I have thought about doing some in person classes for like local people, but I think that would come after. Virtual classes. I want to try some virtual classes first. A lot of people in the group use my recipe.

[00:48:24] It was really cool to go to Mallow Con and people were like, Oh my God, can I take a picture with you? And I was like, what? I'm like that, I feel like such a goofy, silly person. And to have people you want. To take pictures with me or take classes from me has been like a whirlwind. Like it's something, again, I never even expected to make marshmallows.

[00:48:45] Like. I had to learn all the sugar science. I was just Winging it like doing whatever I thought When I was adding things and I've learned like they're like, oh you can't put pineapple in a marshmallow And I'm like, I used to put pineapple in a marshmallow Like I don't know because I just I didn't know that I didn't know that it wasn't supposed to work With the gelatin and so I would just do it. And so when people say like, Oh, Jondell's the expert, like ask her.

[00:49:09] And I'm like, I'm what? Like, I'm just a girl who likes to make marshmallows, you know? So it's been a really interesting journey. Like not just in the selling of the marshmallows, but kind of in the marshmallow group of people like recommending my recipe and wanting to take classes from me.

[00:49:26] Like I've had people say, I will fly to Texas to come take a class from you. And I'm like, you will do what? It's just been a whirlwind. So I do think I want to do classes next because people have been asking for it. I told my sister, I said, Hey, we need to get this class filmed. My husband actually does some editing, he went to school for that.

[00:49:47] So I feel like I'm in a good position to be able to record some classes and put them out there. So I think that my plan for my next steps is just, takes a little while sometimes to figure things out.

[00:49:59] **David Crabill:** So when you talk about this recipe, it sounds like this recipe is fairly notable in the marshmallow community at this point. Is this just something that you posted on a website or on social media?

[00:50:12] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** I just posted it in Marshmallow Making Madness in the group. I would make posts of the marshmallows I made, and then people would say, how did you make that? And I'd copy and paste it into a comment. And it would be like a long comment. wasn't an admin at that point. I just would talk a lot.

[00:50:29] I just talked so much that eventually Wynter was like, do you want to join the admin team? But before that I was just talking a lot to people and they were like, you can put your recipe in the files if you want. And So I just uploaded a Word document with my recipe, put it in there.

[00:50:42] And then people started to try it. And now. it gets recommended all the time. So it's available for free in the group. I've just always been one to share it. If I make any adjustments or make a new flavor, I just say, Hey, I use my base recipe, it's in the files, and then here's what I did differently to get this flavor.

[00:51:00] **David Crabill:** Now, is that the recipe you've been using since the beginning?

[00:51:05] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** I have made changes from when I first started making it over the years. I started using egg whites when, because the recipe that I started with had egg whites. And then I eventually wanted to test shelf stability. I would have never called it that back then. That was six years ago and I didn't even know the word shelf stability in terms of sweets.

[00:51:27] And I just wanted to test that they would last longer without egg whites. And I changed the process. in a way that would work better for me a little bit. So yeah, it's a version of what I started with 11 years ago, but I've made changes even up until I joined the Facebook group. I joined the Facebook group in 2020 in December, and then I made a little bit more tweaking since then.

[00:51:50] So It's a version of what I started with, but I think it's the best version. Yet.

[00:51:54] **David Crabill:** But the egg whites, doesn't that like, don't you need those to incorporate the air into them to make them fluffy?

[00:52:02] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** No, when you whip them up in your mixer, that's what incorporates air and makes them fluffy. When I took out egg whites, I was like, let me see what this is going to be like, if it's going to be very different. I had no idea at this point. Again, I was like, just a girl making marshmallows. I had no idea if it would work or not.

[00:52:21] I just said, I'm going to take them out. When I added egg whites in my recipe or the recipe I started with, it wasn't mine at the time. It was at the very end. So the marshmallows were already whipped up. And so I was like, let me just see if I don't add them, what happens. So they're still fluffy.

[00:52:37] They're soft in a different way. It's really hard to explain, but I feel like they're softer in a different way, but it's not bad because a marshmallow is meant to be soft. They weren't as shiny. Like When I used egg whites. It was shinier, which I don't know that that really matters because when you dust them, it's not shiny anymore.

[00:52:58] And then When the egg whites are in there, you definitely have more time to mess with them. Like if you needed to spread them out in a pan, they

didn't firm up as quickly. I know People who pipe marshmallows use an egg white based recipe, because they don't set up as quickly.

[00:53:13] But When I gave them to family members and friends, because at that point I wasn't selling, I let them eat them. and then asked their opinions, and they were like, they're good. they didn't even know I had taken the egg whites out. There wasn't enough of a difference. so then I was like, that's one less ingredient. It makes it more friendly for people to eat.

[00:53:33] like, if you have an allergy, then you could eat them now if they don't have egg whites. And When I'm selling them, it definitely makes sense in terms of less ingredients. Cheaper to make, and then, less time not having that extra step.

[00:53:45] **David Crabill:** Do you have any help or any employees at this point?

[00:53:52] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** I don't have any employees. Sometimes if I make a lot of batches, like if I have a big market, my sister, my husband, my brother will help me label packages. I hate labeling, I think that's the worst part. So, They'll help me with that sort of thing, and, and that's nice. Or they'll come to markets with me and especially my sister.

[00:54:13] She's a baker again. She's really good with marshmallows. She's made them before. She doesn't like to make them, but if I have a bigger market, she can come and we could serve two people at one time versus just having a line. So she's been really, really helpful and she'll come up with ideas all the time for me and say, Hey, try this or try that, which is nice to have.

[00:54:35] Cause sometimes I, I am racking my brain for a new marshmallow flavor for a month and she's like, okay, what about this? That creative help is awesome to have.

[00:54:45] **David Crabill:** So would you say that you've intentionally scaled back your business? Like you're not doing as many sales now as you were, say a year ago.

[00:54:56] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Yeah, that was very intentional, just because my pain had gotten really out of control. the type of pain that I have specifically, it's not something that there is a cure for right now,

[00:55:10] I just needed to take a step back and intentionally think about how I need to move forward. Cause I was, I felt like, being a mental health professional during the day, I felt like I was doing something that was increasing my pain. And so like harming myself. And I said well, that's not great for my mental health.

[00:55:29] So let me take a step back and think about what. Fluff is going to look like moving forward. People have been asking about classes. So I want to do that. And I think that's going to be a different revenue stream. Which will help if I'm not doing as many markets. And then I took a few months to not make any marshmallows and just see what my pain would look like if I wasn't doing the extra work on top of my full time job.

[00:55:57] And when I did that, and then I had. Some custom orders from friends or customers who have really become friends. And I said, let me, let me take a few of those and see how that goes. And so I feel like right now I'm in a good rhythm where I really like doing custom orders because. I can do like one or two a week.

[00:56:18] And If my goal is to do like eight a month, I would like to spread them out. And my goal is not eight a month right now, but it's just a little bit easier to spread them out and think about what I can take. And then I've been able to kind of focus on Looking at my health and what I need to do for that.

[00:56:36] Like, what are my next steps for that? Because there might be some things I can do to make it a little bit better. And then if I, if I can focus on that right now, then I can get fluff back to where I can do more markets. If my pain is better managed, but I wasn't having time when I was. Doing more of Fluff to really explore some of these other options.

[00:56:59] I just, I was too burned out.

[00:57:01] **David Crabill:** So as you look ahead, where would you like this business to be in a few years?

[00:57:08] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** I really would like to have a balance of helping other marshmallow makers while still making marshmallows for people. Like I already have a customer base and they still ask me like, Hey, when's your next sale? Like, I really want this. And so I want to continue to do that, but I also want to focus on helping other people too, whether it's helping them learn to make marshmallows.

[00:57:36] I really love helping people learn to make marshmallows or having more of a consultation role of how do you start a marshmallow business? Like how do you market a marshmallow business? Because it is different from other cottage businesses or how do you figure out pricing? Because I feel like I've figured that out. It's been a lot of work to figure it out, but I would like to be able to use that knowledge to consult and help other people with that because I feel like I can.

[00:58:05] **David Crabill:** So if someone hears this episode and is inspired to start a marshmallow business, What would you recommend to them?

[00:58:14] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** I really think joining the Marshmallow Making Madness Facebook group is a good place to start because I have my recipe in there. There's other recipes there. You can look at what other people are doing, look at what pitfalls people have struggled with so that you're not having to recreate the wheel.

[00:58:37] You can learn from what other people have figured out and you can get feedback and you don't feel so alone.

[00:58:43] **David Crabill:** Well, Jondell, thank you so much for coming on and sharing all that with us. Now, if someone would like to learn more about you, where can they find you or how can they reach out? So I'm on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, and I have the same handle on all of them. So it's Fluff Marshmallow Co. on all three platforms.

[00:59:05] Perfect. Well, I'll include links to those in the show notes and thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today,

[00:59:13] **Jondell Lafont-Garcia:** Yeah. Thank you so much for having me.

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

[00:59:22] For more information about this episode, go to [forrager.com/podcast/129](https://forrager.com/podcast/129).

[00:59:28] And if you're enjoying this podcast, please take a quick moment right now and leave me a review on Apple Podcasts. It doesn't have to be a long review, but it's truly the best way to support the show and will help others like you find this podcast.



[00:59:41] Finally, if you're thinking about selling your own homemade food, check out my free mini course where I walk you through the steps you need to take to get a cottage food business off the ground. To get the course, go to [cottagefoodcourse.com](http://cottagefoodcourse.com).

[00:59:54] Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.