

Maci Reed with Bake-a-Reed

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 am talking with Maci Reed.

[00:00:12] But first, ConvertKit has rebranded to Kit and recently made a pretty big announcement

[00:00:18] That is great news for cottage food entrepreneurs. If you've listened to the show for a while, you know that I'm a big fan of using Kit to build an email marketing list. Kit has always had a great free tier for their platform, but now it is even better. Now you can use Kit for free for up to 10,000 email subscribers.

[00:00:39] Plus, they will allow you to use one automation sequence for free as well. 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.

[00:00:58] To get started and learn more, you can watch my free email marketing tutorial at forrager.com/email.

[00:01:06] All right, so I have Maci on the show today. She lives in Dover, New Hampshire and sells cookies, custom cakes and other baked goods with her cottage food business Bake-a-Reed.

[00:01:18] Maci never thought she would leave the corporate world and eventually start her own business, but life had other plans for her. Shortly after becoming a new mom, she started offering baked goods to her local community, and her business has grown rapidly ever since.

[00:01:35] She's had custom orders booked almost every weekend since she started the bakery a year and a half ago, and most recently, she's sold well over 1,000 baked goods in a single day.

[00:01:46] In this episode, she shares how she's built her business while being a full-time stay-at-home mom of a toddler, and how a near-death experience when she was younger helped make her the entrepreneur that she is today.

[00:01:59] And with that, let's jump right into this episode.

[00:02:03] Welcome to the show, Maci. Nice to have you here.

[00:02:08] **Maci Reed:** Hi, David. Thank you so much for having me.

[00:02:10] **David Crabill:** Well, Maci, I know you listen to the show and you know, I typically start by asking people about how they started their journey. But for this one, I thought it might be fun to do it. In reverse, I know just a few weeks ago you had the Apple Harvest Day event and I thought maybe we'll start with the end of your journey or, or not the end because you're in the middle of it, but, I know that was a big event for you.

[00:02:36] Can you tell me a little bit about that?

[00:02:38] **Maci Reed:** Absolutely. So, it was Apple Harvest Day in Dover, which I literally grew up going to for my entire life. It was the 40th anniversary. So it's obviously something that's been going on for a very long time. The crowd normally brings in about 60, 000 people, which was absolutely insane. And so it took about two weeks of prep.

[00:02:59] Because I do everything, me, myself, and I, it's just me. So I went there with hundreds and hundreds of items and came home with nothing, which was literally life changing, honestly. I saw so many faces of people that I knew, so many new faces. I was literally taking inquiries for custom orders while standing there. I had people asking about weddings while I was standing there. And I came home needing to answer about a hundred emails for inquiries of orders since then.

[00:03:28] **David Crabill:** 60,000 people, that is like on a state fair level. Um,

[00:03:36] **Maci Reed:** Yes.

[00:03:37] **David Crabill:** I actually looked it up and New Hampshire's state fair draws about that many, except over the course of four days, but this was just one day, right?

[00:03:45] **Maci Reed:** It was one day. It was seven hours long.

[00:03:48] **David Crabill:** I feel like most home bakers would not even commit to that kind of an event.

[00:03:56] **Maci Reed:** So it's funny you say that because when I actually signed up, I obviously wasn't even thinking straight, but they honestly were like, we've never had a home baker do this before. Like, are you sure this is something you want to do? And I was like, yeah. Bring it on. Let's do it. And that was pretty much my adrenaline to push through and make it happen.

[00:04:15] **And I'm really happy that I did.**

[00:04:16] **David Crabill:** Well, it sounds like the actual day, the event went well sales wise. What was it like leading up to that event?

[00:04:24] **Maci Reed:** I pretty much didn't sleep. It was insane. And I wanted it to be super special and fun. So I honestly brought so many new flavors and new recipes. Like it was just something that I had a lot of fun doing. And even though I was stressed at the moment, it was also just really exciting.

[00:04:46] **And obviously one of the most exciting things I've ever done in my life. When you're running on that much adrenaline and you have that much passion for what you're doing, it makes it all the more worth it in the long run.**

[00:04:57] **David Crabill:** What pushed you to even consider this event in the first place?

[00:05:03] **Maci Reed:** Um, I think, honestly, I've done obviously smaller events before. My first event was actually just a year ago yesterday and it was, Usually brings in about 1 -2,000 people, so it was obviously nothing to this level. It was an event that I love going to and I loved the thought of being a part of it and being on the other side of it.

[00:05:26] **And it was one of those things where it was like, you'll never know if you don't try. So I just kind of went full force at it and It paid off.**

[00:05:35] **David Crabill:** I mean, The other way you could have done the event would just be to not have done as much as you did for it, right? Maybe you would just sell out, halfway through the event. like, why did you feel compelled to try to meet the needs of the 60, 000 I think once I started, I honestly didn't want to stop, but I also told myself like, what you can do is what you can do. And that's going to have to be enough. And I had to remind myself that a lot because it was like, yeah, I could sell out in the middle of the day, but Would I have been as happy and how many long term customers could I have missed out on if they came to an empty table because you had to stay set up the

entire time and I had nothing left to offer them or anything for them to look at to be like, Hey, this is something I want to try.

[00:06:27] **Maci Reed:** And if they were to come back to me afterwards, so I kept pushing through and literally as much stuff as I could make between the time I started and right before I left for the event is kind of just what I did.

[00:06:38] **David Crabill:** And you said this was like a turning point in your business.

[00:06:42] **Maci Reed:** Yeah, I don't want to say it was quote unquote life changing, but the amount of orders I've gotten just since that day from people that I met that day, I mean, I'm talking businesses, weddings, custom orders, it's changed my whole outlook on the way I'm running my business and how. Basically giving myself more credit where credit is due because there are ups and downs of owning a business and having days where you're looking like you're not going to be nearly as busy as you plan to be. And sometimes you just have to really put yourself out there. To get something in return and to get the customers that you're looking to get and to have people that enjoy your product and come back to you for their custom orders and their special days and their weddings and putting myself out at this event was so scary in the moment.

[00:07:32] But now looking back, there's really not much I would change because I met so many people and we connected and it was personal connections that I don't think I would have found anywhere else and getting these new customers and these new inquiries and being able to know that what I did got me a huge group of new customers that I'm hoping I have with me in the long run from here on out.

[00:07:57] **David Crabill:** Now, did you have any help? Cause it, it just doesn't even seem possible to me to seize an event without some kind of help.

[00:08:06] **Maci Reed:** Like, baking wise, no, it was just myself. Packaging was just for myself. I do have my husband who helps me with, like, all of my labeling because he's wicked technology and can do everything much faster than I can. So like, he types out all my labels, so with all the new flavors and stuff I was bringing with me, he was making all those labels for me, so that everything went much smoother and I didn't have to focus on that.

[00:08:30] But the day of it was myself, my husband, and actually my dad, who is a quarter of the reason I do what I do because he's been a chef now for 40 years. And there were literally lines the entire day with all three of us checking

people out at a time. And do you know how much you actually sold that day in terms of like quantity of product?

[00:08:52] I don't have an exact number, but I like scribbling down as fast as I could, the stuff that I had with me, because like I said, I was literally baking and packaging up until I had to leave for the event. It was upwards of about 14 to 1500 products. The rough ballpark is about 1500.

[00:09:11] **David Crabill:** Well that's impressive, I mean just the fact that you did all of the baking and the packaging yourself, you had a little bit of help but still like, I don't know if anyone's tackled an event that size. As being the sole baker, that's been on the podcast. So that 's very impressive.

[00:09:31] **Maci Reed:** Thank you.

[00:09:32] **David Crabill:** Well, let's go back to the beginning of your journey now. How did it all get started?

[00:09:38] **Maci Reed:** So it honestly goes back to becoming a mother. I ended up having a preemie, who's now two, and it was coming near the end of my maternity leave and I couldn't do it. There was just no way that I was going back to work with a preemie who was having trouble gaining weight and going back to a full time corporate job, sitting at a desk and not being home with my baby.

[00:10:07] I quit my job and got him where he needed to be. It got to the point where sometimes in motherhood, you kind of lose your own identity and you are just a mother and nothing else. And I find myself in a funk at that point. And I was like, I need to do something to pour my heart into and have it be like my thing.

[00:10:29] Yes, I'm a mother, but I'm also blank and I needed to find what that was for me. And I grew up. Always baking. Like me and my grandmother every weekend, we're baking cookies or cakes or bread or something. When I had lost her, I honestly had lost my love for doing any of that.

[00:10:47] I didn't even want to be in the kitchen anymore. And I was like, I think it's time. It's my time to go back to doing what I know I enjoy doing and finding myself in that journey. So honestly, I just started baking and I had posted about it on Facebook and the first day I posted just random hobby cupcakes I had made, people were like, I want some.

[00:11:10] And I was like, Oh well, that's cool. And it was almost Easter at that point. And I stopped and I was like wait a second, What could I make of this? So I started looking into my cottage food laws and what I would need to do and what I would need to follow in order to maybe make a little bit of money on the side doing this. So Easter honestly, I think was like two weeks away and I was like, you know what? I'm gonna do this. I'm just gonna see how it goes and I'm gonna do this and I put out that I was gonna be doing Easter orders. And there was so much feedback from people wanting things that I was like, maybe I should make a business page on Facebook and have somewhere to keep all of this together.

[00:11:53] So I'm not just using my personal Facebook for all of this. And I made a Facebook page. And I think within like the first few days, it was up to like 200, 300, 400 followers. I pretty much took over the amount that I should have for these Easter orders and just all of a sudden had these people either that I knew or I didn't know ordering for Easter two weeks after I had started this journey and it kind of just skyrocketed from there and pretty much all of those customers that I had that day at the very beginning are still customers now.

[00:12:25] **David Crabill:** Okay, this is not typical, right? I mean, to, To be posting on social media, even on your personal page and saying, Hey, you know, this is what I'm doing. And have that much interest and accrue like three to 400 followers on your business page within a few days. Like Did you have a really active personal Facebook account or social media account leading up to this?

[00:12:53] **Maci Reed:** So I would say, aside from all of this, like my social media was used very much for my own personal story, which I'm actually a burn survivor and was in a house fire when I was 16 I used my social media as a platform for people to not feel alone in their journeys and their stories. I just accumulated so many friends and

[00:13:18] Acquaintances on my personal Facebook that every time I was sharing something, it was about not giving up or if you need somebody like I'm here, like I always wanted to be like a safe space for people. And I think because I was kind of known as that person and then I came to Facebook and I was like, Hey, I'm a mom.

[00:13:36] I'm a stay at home mom now. And this is a hobby that I kind of want to see where it goes. so many people admired that I was even Attempting that, that even more support came from that. And that's kind of how I got to where I am today.

[00:13:50] **David Crabill:** Okay. So you, you were definitely very comfortable with social media and you had a pretty active following on social media. At the point at which you started this cottage food business.

[00:14:03] **Maci Reed:** Yes. Yeah, absolutely.

[00:14:05] **David Crabill:** Now you mentioned, I know it's, it's all over everything you do. The fact that you're a burn survivor can you share a little bit more about, that and how it's affected who you are today?

[00:14:15] **Maci Reed:** Yeah, absolutely.

[00:14:17] So when I was 16, I woke up in the middle of the night to a house fire that I was trapped inside of. I was obviously able to get out with the help of the Dover fire community, which is why Dover, New Hampshire is so very important to me. And I was hospitalized for over a month, had third degree burns, had to get skin grafts, I was on a breathing tube, like I was 16 and very, very close to losing my life.

[00:14:43] And so when you're given a second chance like that, some people would dwell on it and allow it to consume them in a very negative way, and I can see how that happens. It obviously took a lot to get to the positive mindset that I'm in now, but I took it and I was like, this is my second chance at life, and I'm not going to waste it.

[00:15:05] I've literally gone to burn conferences around the United States. I worked through a volunteer program at Shriners Burn Hospital in Boston, which is where I was a patient. So when I was 17, 18, 19, I was working with kid patients there. It was to the point where I was like, if this was going to happen to anyone, I'm so glad that it happened to me because I'm allowed to use this as my reason to inspire and help other people through their journeys, whether it was that they were a burn survivor or any other possible situation that they had been in and to look at it from the opposite side of how others will look at it and take it as a I'm thanking God that this happened to me because it made me the person that I am today and has given me the opportunities that it has given me.

[00:15:56] **David Crabill:** So you clearly, you know, almost died and you were hospitalized for a month or so. Are there still any challenges correlated to that event, you know physical challenges that you deal with are you? totally recovered

[00:16:12] **Maci Reed:** Yes, actually, I have a lung disease now because of the smoke inhalation that I endured. I don't want to say I have to limit myself because I obviously push myself quite a lot, but, there's still days where, you know. It can be annoying that it happened to me because my lungs don't work properly.

[00:16:31] I'm still being seen for the outcome of what happened. And then I obviously had to get used to having the scars that I do because I was burned on 14 percent of my body or third degree burns on 14 percent of my body and had to get skin grafts. And learning to live with that was hard, and I obviously accepted it and have lived with it, but there are still days where, like, if I have a lung flare up or something happens, that it does become obnoxious.

[00:16:59] But again, you have to take the positive for what it is and appreciate that you were given that second chance, even though, you There's still reminders of it every day.

[00:17:07] **David Crabill:** obviously, you know you already had a love for baking and that is very separate from this event and, you very well could have continued on and started this cottage food business, even if you hadn't been a burn survivor. I'm just wondering, like, do you feel like your business is different today, because you went through that experience?

[00:17:31] **Maci Reed:** I do, because I think, my passion and everything I do is a bit different than it would have been. And I don't want to say I wouldn't be passionate and I would be ungrateful and like a completely different person, but I think the way that I look at things and wholeheartedly put my love and passion into what I do is sort of because of the person I became from that event.

[00:17:58] I think the passion and love and personal connections that I've gotten from having this business is because of what I've been through in my life and the way that I look at different situations.

[00:18:12] **David Crabill:** So when you started this business, you said that it was basically born from having a baby, and that he was a premature baby and that it was hard to leave him and go back to work. So had you always expected to go back to work after having him?

[00:18:29] **Maci Reed:** That was my plan, to return to work and put them in a daycare and do basically the day to day of what Americans do, as to wake up, do their nine to five, and go home and spend time with their family and then do it all over again. I think that was my plan. Aspect in my head kind of changed.

[00:18:49] Obviously when I had a premature baby and he was having the struggle of gaining weight and thriving and the thought of even putting him in a daycare was horrifying. Quitting my job obviously was the best thing to me now, but back then it was obviously horrifying and scary and probably not the best decision I had ever made in that moment because we were then one income, and having a newborn baby, but I'm obviously very grateful that that is the decision that I made.

[00:19:21] **David Crabill:** So you initially had some regrets staying at home with him.

[00:19:25] **Maci Reed:** I wouldn't say regrets, but obviously there were challenges that came along with going from two full time job incomes to one and having a newborn baby and obviously still having bills to pay. It was definitely scary, but I don't think I ever truly regretted it in a sense. If you hadn't had a baby that had the challenges that he had, you probably would have gone back to work, right? And you probably wouldn't have ever started this cottage food business.

[00:19:58] That is correct. And it's honestly something that I think about quite often.

[00:20:04] **David Crabill:** And remind me how long after he was born, did you choose to start the cottage food business.

[00:20:10] **Maci Reed:** He was just about nine months old at the time.

[00:20:16] **David Crabill:** So you started this business when he was quite young. And of course, it's not like you had all the free time in the world to start a business.

[00:20:25] Was the business born out of the need to have extra income? Or do you feel like, you would have started it anyway.

[00:20:33] **Maci Reed:** I definitely think I would have started it anyway because I just needed something outside of being a mother that I could focus on and put my passion into. Getting income was helpful and something that was great, but it obviously didn't start right away being a huge profit.

[00:20:53] Like I went from having nothing for baking to literally needing everything in order to fulfill orders. It went from really no profit at all. And it

takes a long time as a small business owner to ever really start seeing profit. I think I knew starting off that it wasn't really going to be money per se.

[00:21:14] And I wasn't. Looking for money at the time, but now it is my full time job. It is my way of income in this economy of having a way to pay my bills, but also feeling financially secure outside of just having bills and knowing that I'm making income now that I obviously wouldn't have if I didn't start this business,

[00:21:38] **David Crabill:** How long do you feel like it took you in terms of months to get to a point where you felt like you were profiting from the business?

[00:21:48] **Maci Reed:** I mean, it takes upwards of a year to like, actually feel like and physically see I mean, if you have everything you need from the start for baking, then I'd say maybe a little bit sooner I would have seen it, but I was getting paid and then going out and buying specific pans I needed or just things that I would need to fill that order that I didn't already have just laying around my house.

[00:22:16] So, uh, Between supplies and everything needed to physically bake everything between eggs and butter and all of that. I didn't really start seeing a profit until I started to learn more about how to do it properly and buying in bulk and doing all those things until probably six months in. And then you would slowly see profit.

[00:22:37] And I would say like actually making profit and seeing that I was making profit. It took about a year.

[00:22:45] **David Crabill:** So it sounds like your business just took off with the Easter thing. Now, what were you actually selling that was generating these orders?

[00:22:53] **Maci Reed:** I would say just from the start, I was really just doing cupcakes and then people would ask for other things and I was like, sure let's make it. And from there it became cakes and cookies and brownies. literally everything that people were asking for, I was making.

[00:23:10] Now obviously I don't do that. I have my menu and that's what you get, but really what people wanted is what I was giving them at the time, which I think really helped with getting the people that I was getting, because if they were seeking something out that they couldn't find, and I was willing to make it

and I made it, they then became a long term customer that just kept coming back.

[00:23:30] And it kind of just grew from there about what I was making and what people wanted.

[00:23:35] **David Crabill:** Well, cupcakes, cakes, brownies, cookies, I mean, these sound like pretty typical bakery items. Do you feel like you were differentiated in any way from the more established bakeries in your area?

[00:23:49] **Maci Reed:** once I started really having fun with flavors, cause I have a lot of flavors to choose from because I do like custom cupcakes and cakes, but I also do like gourmet cupcakes and cakes and my jumbo cookies and flavors galore. Those were a little bit harder to find locally.

[00:24:08] some of the most outrageous and random and fun flavors that I was bringing to the table, you couldn't really find anywhere else. And like my jumbo bakery cookies that I make now that mostly come with me to events, which are actually starting to become a lot of my custom orders are not something I've really ever seen around here.

[00:24:27] I know it's stuff that people can order online for bakeries that do shipping, but locally, my cookies are some of the only ones that are around here that people get really excited for.

[00:24:38] **David Crabill:** Now, that's kind of surprising, because that jumbo cookie trend has been around for a few years now. but maybe the other local bakeries in your area haven't hopped on the trend.

[00:24:49] **Maci Reed:** Yeah, I would say they definitely do, cookies, but no one does, half pound cookies the way that I do my big half pound cookies, so I think people just get really excited to see that, and a lot of people are like, oh my god, that's a cookie, so I think people around here just aren't really used to seeing them like that.

[00:25:06] **David Crabill:** Would you say that the majority of your orders are for gourmet flavors or are they for just the basic standard flavors when you're making cakes and cupcakes and such? I would say it's a pretty even divide. A lot of my weddings and others like, if businesses order, they want a regular cake, but then they want gourmet cupcakes to go with it. I think a lot of people still want their custom orders. Like this past weekend, I had a custom order for themed cupcakes, but with that, they wanted my gourmet cookies.

[00:25:43] **Maci Reed:** So it was like they still stick to their safe place of their custom order, but then they want something gourmet to go along with it.

[00:25:50] **David Crabill:** So once you got past Easter of 2023, your business had definitely kicked off at that point. Can you take me through the next few weeks? What did that look like?

[00:26:01] **Maci Reed:** I literally didn't have another weekend off until I took a vacation at the end of June in 2023. Ever since then, I haven't had a single weekend off.

[00:26:14] **David Crabill:** So you mean you have like custom orders booked every weekend?

[00:26:17] **Maci Reed:** Every weekend since then. Yep.

[00:26:21] **David Crabill:** How about how many custom orders were you getting per week in that first year?

[00:26:26] **Maci Reed:** Like right at the start, it wasn't more than one or two, maybe the occasional three, but depending on the size of the order now, I'd tap out between like four to six custom orders, depending on the size of them.

[00:26:40] **David Crabill:** Now were you just doing custom orders only in 2023?

[00:26:45] **Maci Reed:** Yep. So it was custom orders only. And then I did two or three events at the very end of the year. But other than that, it was all custom orders. And now like, as we've talked about, I'm doing all custom orders with the occasional event in between.

[00:27:03] **David Crabill:** means that's quite a growth trajectory to have custom orders And to have that kind of word of mouth spread within just the first few months. you know, I don't know if it's your social media presence, or if you took your social media skills and brought them over to your business page, I mean, would you say that your new customers were coming from other people talking about you, or are they coming from people finding your.

[00:27:30] Facebook page, like where do you feel like you are getting your new customers within the first year?

[00:27:35] **Maci Reed:** Honestly, word of mouth was absolutely everything to my business because I mostly started with moms. Like it was local moms that were really excited about the journey that I was going on that were coming to me and then they were telling other moms and moms were telling their families and this, that, and another thing.

[00:27:53] And, uh, people that would be like, Oh, I heard from you from such and such. I heard about you from such and such. And like, I do remember one specific moment where I got a phone call for an order and they were like, yeah, I was talking in a gas station and someone said to call you for an order.

[00:28:08] And I was like, That was the most random thing anybody could have ever said. They were talking in a gas station about eating a cake and someone there just happened to be like, Oh, hey, call this person for a cake. They're amazing. Or whatever they said. And that to me was like, Whoa, This is becoming so much more than I ever pictured, but I'm obviously so grateful for the people that are supporting me and sharing their support for me with other people. And word of mouth is getting me to where I am today.

[00:28:38] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I'm still just kind of trying to dissect and figure out what caused your business to ramp up so fast because, I mean, I understand your products, I'm sure, fantastic, but I would imagine that the established bakeries in your area also have pretty good products. Do you feel like people resonated with your story?

[00:29:00] Do you feel like people resonated with you? Do you feel like your products are really just that much better? What do you think caused people to rally around you and recommend you as much as they did?

[00:29:12] **Maci Reed:** I think honestly, it's a mix. I mean, I don't think I'm better than everybody in the area, but I think when it comes to being a mom and a small business owner and literally doing all of this by myself, people really admire me. That and the passion that I've put into it and how hard I've worked to get where I am and work on my social media presence and work on helping obviously spread the word of my business and my products and I'm sure my story has helped because it, brings a real personal level to what I'm doing.

[00:29:50] And people have, shared their stories with me, like at Apple Harvest, people would come up to me and tell me a journey they've been on and how, they admire my strength and my ability to do what I do and put my passion into it and my love for it. I think showing people That you can go through some really tough stuff and come out on the other side of it and be extremely

successful and whatever you want to be successful in as long as you put in the work has helped a lot with people resonating with me and my business.

[00:30:21] **David Crabill:** Well, clearly your business is doing phenomenally well. And you happen to choose a pretty unideal time to start the business, given that your son was only a few months old at that point. You came from the corporate world, but looking back, do you wish you had started the business sooner or would you like to quit your job to start your own business?

[00:30:46] **Maci Reed:** There's definitely days where I think about what if I had been doing this all along or started way earlier than I did, but I'm a huge believer in everything happening for a reason. I think the timing was just what it was supposed to be. Obviously, there are days where I wish that I was 5, 10 years into this and had been who knows where with my business.

[00:31:06] I think, when it was supposed to happen is exactly when it happened. Who knows what my business would have looked like if I had started it earlier or even later. You never know, obviously, the what ifs. But starting it when I did and Easter just happening to be two weeks from when I posted about it was a huge part of how I've gotten to where I am today.

[00:31:28] So I wouldn't change it, but it's definitely something I've thought of for sure.

[00:31:33] **David Crabill:** Doing like six events per week, and I know if you're doing that many events, then you've got a lot more inquiries than that, that don't end up becoming orders,

[00:31:47] probably too.

[00:31:49] Plus the baking, plus the delivery, plus the marketing, plus the business stuff, plus the social media. Like, you have a, what, a two year old son?

[00:31:57] I just like, wondering if you have help with him, or like, how does that work?

[00:32:03] **Maci Reed:** I'm with him full time. He's still with me at literally all times. I usually try to do as much as I can at nighttime when he's with his dad and his dad is home. I kind of balance it out. I'm giving him my undivided attention while also running my business. 24 7 giving that as much attention as I possibly can.

[00:32:24] And work life balance is a struggle. It always has been and it's something I'm always continuously working on. But above all else, I'm a mother and nothing would ever take away from that. But now, Compared to where I was a year ago with being able to balance those things out. I think I've done a pretty good job at being able to be a mom, be a business owner, and also just be me for five minutes a day.

[00:32:51] so to put aside from being a mom and a business owner and just Being able to take a step back and kind of see what I've done, both with my son and getting him to where he is today and my business and getting it to where it is today.

[00:33:03] **David Crabill:** What do you feel like you've done in the past year, specifically that's allowed you to have better work life balance?

[00:33:11] **Maci Reed:** Obviously a learning curve and it still is to this day. You still learn something new every day, but Knowing my time management and saying, Hey, at this point in my day, I'm going to take 30 minutes to an hour to work on this and my marketing and my social media and answering inquiries and doing what I need to do there.

[00:33:29] And then balancing my time when I'm physically working on orders. And obviously now I'm much faster than I was a year ago at finishing A cake or cupcakes or whatever. So it's really just been about learning the time management skills and knowing how much time I need for each thing and being able to put that time aside so that I know the times that I'll have to do other things aside from my business and being a mother and everything else in life.

[00:33:55] That's crazy as it is.

[00:33:58] **David Crabill:** As you know, I'm a dad of young kids. I'm not sure how you do it, but I guess you said you don't get much sleep, right?

[00:34:04] **Maci Reed:** That is correct. Yeah. I don't think I've fully recovered. Nevermind from a newborn's sleep. To now. I don't think I've fully slept eight hours in two plus years.

[00:34:14] **David Crabill:** Most of 2023 was custom orders, and then you did a few events at the end of the year. Have you done more events this year?

[00:34:24] **Maci Reed:** I think last year I did three, and this year I'll be wrapping up at seven or eight of them.

[00:34:31] And the rest of the weekends, yeah, are custom orders.

[00:34:34] **David Crabill:** And it sounds like you're pretty busy with custom orders, so what causes you to seek out the events in the first place, you know, it seems like you could just stick to word of mouth and custom orders and you'd be quite busy just at that.

[00:34:49] **Maci Reed:** I agree. And sometimes I question myself as to why I do it, but it's, it's always so much fun and I have so much fun doing them. And it's my time to try out new flavors because I'm just focused on the event and what I'm bringing with me. I'm meeting new people in the process and I'm still getting new customers, so yeah, I could just stick to custom orders and be okay, but I also still want to have fun. And with custom orders, people most of the time know exactly what they want and tell you exactly what they want. And that's what I do. But sometimes it's fun to just be able to play around and do what I want to do.

[00:35:28] And that's, that's what I do with my events. So it's my creative side being able to come out.

[00:35:32] **David Crabill:** Now, how about pricing? How are you currently pricing your products in general?

[00:35:40] **Maci Reed:** Oh, that question. It's so hard because as we know, pricing of everything has gone up and up and up. And with things like butter and eggs always increasing, it's unfortunately, when my prices also have to increase, because. There is no profit if all people are paying for is supplies. So it took a long time to figure out how to properly price something and know that I'm not just Doing it to do it.

[00:36:10] And then I'm making at least some profit from it. I do actually use an app called CakeCost, that has helped me break everything down and know how much I'm spending on what and how to properly price something in order to make at least some profit,

[00:36:28] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like you're priced lower than other, say, brick and mortar bakeries in the area, or are you about the same or a little higher?

[00:36:37] **Maci Reed:** I'm definitely not higher. I would say we're probably about equal if I had to really guess. Yeah.

[00:36:45] **David Crabill:** So it's not like you're coming in with low pricing that's attracting a lot of people.

[00:36:51] **Maci Reed:** No, I mean maybe like at the very beginning my prices weren't as high obviously, but now yeah, that's definitely not happening.

[00:36:58] **David Crabill:** I saw an interesting post from you about, I don't know. It was like getting harassed by a couple at events. Which is like something I never heard of before, but can you share a little bit about what you're referring to there?

[00:37:14] **Maci Reed:** Yes, there is another home bakery at my local that apparently does not like my existence. they also go to some of the events that I go to and have said some pretty nasty and mean, things to me and to other people at the event that we're working, at booths next to them, who then came up to me and was like, Hey, I just want you to know that they said this really not okay thing about you.

[00:37:41] And, um, I wasn't okay with it, so I'm sharing with you, to the point where I did have to reach out to the event coordinator of the events that they go to and say, hey, this is the situation that I'm extremely not okay and uncomfortable with. They are old enough to be my parents, and not only have they harassed me, but their grown children that are my age and older have also harassed me.

[00:38:05] I just need you to know that I've been extremely respectful and haven't said anything to them, but If it gets to the point where I need to, like, this is, just what it is. So the event coordinator was absolutely horrified and spoke to them and said, obviously, if it were to ever happen again, they're not allowed back.

[00:38:23] But actually, my first event back with them since then is this weekend. So we will see how it goes.

[00:38:31] **David Crabill:** That's so strange and atypical. Now, is it just that they don't like your competition with them or that you're taking business away from them?

[00:38:40] **Maci Reed:** I don't want to like be offensive to anyone, but they are very God oriented and told me that making money off of business is very wrong of me to do, They sell everything for a dollar to two dollars, and I do not do

that, and they basically told me how wrong I was for doing that, and I don't think they like me because of it.

[00:39:04] **David Crabill:** So they're basically not making money with their business.

[00:39:08] **Maci Reed:** Correct. You got that right. Well, I'm a little curious. Cause it's like you're not the only person running a bakery in your area, right? Like, are they doing this to everyone who's profiting?

[00:39:23] I have a feeling it was because when they approached me to say that, I didn't really respect that they said that to me and spoke to me the way that they did, and everybody else probably just stayed quiet, and I did not. I would say for some of the events, a lot of them also have storefronts and other successful businesses and they're not just one person running a home bakery the way that I am.

[00:39:47] So I don't know if that's what upsets them so much or just sets me apart from the other bakers that are at these events. But as far as I know, it's only ever happened to me.

[00:39:57] **David Crabill:** Well, we know that social media helped kickstart your business, but you've also done quite well on social media with your business accounts. especially TikTok. Seems to be one that you've done particularly well with. What's worked well in growing your TikTok account.

[00:40:18] **Maci Reed:** With TikTok, I've made so many friends that are bakers. We live together. We bake together. We've grown a community of people that really enjoy what we do and the message that we spread. we just get on there. We do our orders together. We laugh, we have fun and people watch it and just love to hang out with us and do it with us. We were teaching different cinnamon roll classes every month and people were doing it along with us. And it's just something that we've really found a community in, in the baking community on TikTok is so supportive and loving and just everybody gets along so well.

[00:40:53] And I think, though, that is just kind of how I've grown and doing things in my life obviously helps a lot. And it's just something that recently it's not something I've done for a long time, I have found a new love. And, it's just another outlet for me to share what I'm doing. So fostering a community is a pretty important thing for you, Yes, absolutely.

[00:41:15] **David Crabill:** Speaking of the fostering community, I noticed that you've started two Facebook groups now. Can you share a little bit about what caused you to start those?

[00:41:27] **Maci Reed:** So the Bake and Roll With Us one is actually our group for like the classes that we teach so that every Tuesday this month we've been doing the cinnamon rolls. So we post in there like the recipe that we're doing and the instructions and what time we're doing it and all of that.

[00:41:42]

[00:41:42] **Maci Reed:** So we use that Facebook group for that. And then the bakers tiktok one is just for the bakers of tiktok that just need a group to go to where they can talk to other bakers and relate to other bakers and not have Viewers in there too because obviously the one that we do with the classes has viewers in it, too so it's really just a group for just the creators themselves to be able to relate to each other and

[00:42:05] **David Crabill:** So with community being such an important part of this business for you, do you feel like you had some kind of outlet like that in your life before this business?

[00:42:16] **Maci Reed:** I definitely think this is something that I've found along the way of being a small business owner. And sometimes you need someone to relate to that's also doing literally the exact same thing you're doing, that you don't know. Personally or beforehand or knew you before you were a business owner to just connect with on a different level because they understand Your business and what you're doing and they're doing it too. And like to find a different connection and helpful resource. And those people that I didn't have before,

[00:42:50] **David Crabill:** So do you feel like social media has been kind of your way to connect with the greater cottage food community and other bakers like yourself? Or do you feel like it's also helped grow your local business?

[00:43:04] **Maci Reed:** my TikTok specifically has been about growing and finding more creators and home bakers and finding. a group of a sense and those people and having that community. And as far as my other social media with Facebook and my Instagram, that's what helps my business more than my TikTok, I'd say.

[00:43:28] **David Crabill:** I noticed that your Facebook account is a lot more popular than your Instagram account. Why do you think that is?

[00:43:34] **Maci Reed:** I would say I'm definitely not as good at posting on Instagram as I am on Facebook, which I'm actually starting to work on. Cause I would love to grow my Instagram. And that is something that I have as a goal of mine, but I'm just always. on Facebook, because that's where I first started. I didn't make my Instagram right away.

[00:43:54] And all of the followers just happened to go to Facebook, because it started as friends of mine on Facebook, and people sharing it, and so on and so forth. So I think I've just always focused more on the Facebook aspect than the Instagram,

[00:44:09] **David Crabill:** Well, you had a love for baking before starting this business. Did you have any kind of business experience before you started your cottage food bakery?

[00:44:21] **Maci Reed:** Absolutely none. This was all just brand new to me and a learning experience for sure.

[00:44:29] **David Crabill:** So what have you done to learn the business aspects? Of the bakery.

[00:44:35] **Maci Reed:** I would say a lot of Google, a lot of reaching out to resources and the friends that I found and friends that I knew beforehand. And focusing every day on trying to get better and learn more and get to where I felt as if I was a successful business, but also a successful business owner and knowing what I'm doing and what I'm talking about and how to handle situations as they come about.

[00:45:03] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like it was difficult to learn the business aspects of it?

[00:45:09] **Maci Reed:** I would say, I mean, it wasn't easy because obviously you want to make sure you're doing it correctly. Obviously, there's tons and tons of resources out there now for cottage bakers. You just want to make sure you're doing it correctly and you're doing it safely. It was research after research after research and it took time asking a lot of questions and reaching out to people. Obviously it was worth doing the research that I did. It wasn't easy, but it obviously wasn't hard either.

[00:45:39] **David Crabill:** I saw somewhere where you said you did, or maybe you're still a mastermind. Can you share a little bit about that?

[00:45:50] **Maci Reed:** Oh my gosh. Yes. So I actually did do a six week mastermind class with my wedding photographer who runs this class for small business owners twice a year. so she had reached out to me because she had mostly only With photographers beforehand, and she knew me before any of this started, and just asked if it's something that I would want to be a part of so that the class could also get an aspect outside of photography and running a different business as well.

[00:46:18] I was able to learn from the photographers and them owning their businesses , and they were able to learn from me. And it was just nice to have that community of small business owners with such the information and knowledge that they had and were willing to share in that environment.

[00:46:32] **David Crabill:** In my world of being a content creator, masterminds are talked about a lot. You know, That's a very common thing for entrepreneurs in the online influencer space to do. I don't hear a lot of cottage food bakers talking about masterminds though. I mean, well, I guess first you could share what a mastermind is, cause I don't even know if it's been talked about before on the podcast.

[00:46:57] **Maci Reed:** Yeah, absolutely. So it was a six week program. We met once a week. We learned literally things that I hadn't even really known about before, like your SEOs for your website and. The way to tag your stuff on Instagram so that it's seen and just all like the behind the scenes stuff that I honestly didn't really know before. it was really like you deep dive into your business and other people's businesses. And basically we set goals for the end of the mastermind of where we want it to be. or how we were going to get there. So my photographer, her name's Amanda, ran the mastermind, but really had each small business owner dive into their own business, but also help dive into the other's businesses and how to help them succeed and have someone from the outside looking in and saying, Hey like, what if you tried this or you tried this?

[00:47:47] Or, Just getting another set of eyes on your business, like really deep diving into it and helping you. Get to your goal. So there were six of us and everybody really got to deep dive into each other's businesses and basically be guided through that six week program of how to help yourself grow and what you needed to do in order to get where you wanted to be.

[00:48:10] **David Crabill:** Is that something that you plan on doing again?

[00:48:14] **Maci Reed:** It's definitely something I would consider doing again. And like you said, I don't think it's something that a lot of cottage bakers do. It's not really even something I totally knew about beforehand. Like I said, I was with a group of photographers and I can only imagine what it would be like if it was a group of bakers who ran cottage food bakeries and knew the ins and outs the same way that We did and we were able to relate on that level and help each other with the knowledge that we have.

[00:48:43] I'm sure that would actually be super rad and something I would absolutely love to do if I was there.

[00:48:49] **David Crabill:** Well, you've run the business for a year and a half now. I know you've done a lot of custom orders. Are there any that stand out in your mind?

[00:48:58] **Maci Reed:** I think really like the one that I'll always remember is my first wedding cause it just felt like I really did at this moment. It was honestly just a small cake and cupcakes, but delivering it and setting it up just kind of felt like this is my, I made moment. And let's honestly think about that one a lot.

[00:49:17] As far as custom orders, honestly, just the people that I've related to on a personal level and have been really excited, like obviously doing like first birthdays and stuff that feels so important to these people or doing gender reveals, like knowing that you're part of that extraordinary moment for those people is really exciting. Do you feel like there's a certain style that you adhere to with your baked goods?

[00:49:42] I mean, most people will send like an inspiration photo of what they're looking for and they know, like, I'm going to put my own spin on it, but I think I love that people come to you with a vision of what they want, whether they're explaining it or they have a photo to show, And being able to give them something that outdoes their expectations is one of the funnest parts of doing what I do.

[00:50:06] **David Crabill:** I feel like serving other people is a consistent trend I've noticed across this interview, whether it be, you know, starting out and just making what people want, instead of trying to, you know, have your own menu and, starting a Facebook group to help others or doing the TikTok thing. Do you feel like that's why you have been as successful as you are?

[00:50:31] **Maci Reed:** I think this question all kind of stems back to you asking me, like, would I have done this business the way that I have if the fire never happened to me? And I think just the person that I am because of that is about. serving people and giving back to people and making people happy, which is what I've always wanted to do.

[00:50:51] I think it's helped a lot in this business and to grow. And like I said, connecting to people on a personal level has extremely helped. the growth of my business for sure.

[00:51:03] **David Crabill:** As you look ahead into the future, what are your plans?

[00:51:09] **Maci Reed:** The goal from the very beginning was to be home with my baby. And that's not something that I want to change anytime soon. And obviously there's so many paths that this could go down, but right now staying a cottage baker and being at home and doing what I'm doing is my goal for now.

[00:51:28] And maybe years from now when my child is grown and in school or whatever, I would look at a storefront, but that's so far away from what I want right now. the ability to run a cottage bakery and to do this from home and be my own boss and do it the way that I've done it is something that I cherish and I don't want to change anytime soon.

[00:51:53] **David Crabill:** What would you say to someone who is starting out on their journey today?

[00:51:57] **Maci Reed:** Don't give up, I know that's cliché to say, but You can find yourself being so hard on yourself and do I want to keep going? Do I want to give up? Like, Is this going to be worth it? And I can promise you when you put in the work and your passion and your love for what you're doing is there.

[00:52:16] It's all going to work out the way that it's supposed to work out and you will be successful. And it doesn't always happen overnight. And I know how lucky I am to have gotten where I've gotten in a year and a half. And it doesn't happen for everyone. And I think that's a really important outlook too, is to know, like, this isn't the typical way that this happens.

[00:52:35] And I know that I'm extremely lucky, but I also want to make sure that other people know that it takes time and it takes work and it takes patience. Passion and drive to grow a successful business.

[00:52:46] **David Crabill:** I actually wouldn't say that you were lucky. I think that the business was kind of a natural culmination of who you are. Even though you technically started at the beginning of 2023, in some ways, you had kind of been fostering, building connections and building the skills of making those connections for a very long time.

[00:53:11] So I don't think it was luck. But I do think there'll be some people who hear this and think, Oh, well, isn't that nice for her that, you know, she had a big social media following before she started. And I wish I had a big social media following. Like maybe they don't even use social media.

[00:53:29] And then there also might be someone who's like, well, you know, she has this compelling story about being a burn survivor, you know, and people might be like, well, there's nothing special about me that, you know, I can lean on for my business. What would you say to someone like that?

[00:53:46] **Maci Reed:** I think it's all about perspective. You can dwell on the fact that you don't have a life changing story to share through your business, but that doesn't mean that your business is going to be any less successful. I personally think that if you put in the work and the connections and you're extremely personable and open with your ideal clientele, you're going to grow and you're going to make those connections and it may take time, but you really just have to be willing to put in that time and your passion and Know that not, every single person you meet is going to be a client and that has to be okay.

[00:54:26] it's really about. Being yourself, whether you have a story like I do or not and putting yourself out there and just working towards your goal, regardless of if you see gratification or not. And it's really always just about the perspective of how you go about your business. And if you say, I'm going to fail, then you're setting yourself up for failure and to just kind of switch that mindset into positivity. And it makes a huge difference.

[00:54:54] **David Crabill:** Do you feel like positivity is something that you already had because of your experiences? Or do you feel like it's something that you've learned over the course of running this business?

[00:55:07] **Maci Reed:** I definitely had a positive outlook on most things beforehand, but I think my positivity towards Everything has grown more since starting this business.

[00:55:20] **David Crabill:** Has there been any point a half where you've thought about quitting your business?

[00:55:26] **Maci Reed:** there were some really, really long nights where I questioned if it was worth it. And if I questioned if I was losing out on the time with my family that I was losing out on. doing what I was doing was worth it. I don't think I ever considered quitting per se, but I would say there've been some really hard days where I had to question it.

[00:55:48] And I really had to refocus on the bigger picture and remind myself why I do what I do in order to motivate myself and get back on track.

[00:55:59] **David Crabill:** What do you feel like has kept you going in this business?

[00:56:05] **Maci Reed:** Honestly, the connections that I've made and the people I've met. have really honestly set my soul on fire. Like I loved what I was doing beforehand, but I fall in love with it more and more as I go, because I'm getting opportunities that I didn't get before. And I've met people that I didn't know before.

[00:56:23] every weekend that I just keep myself going is another weekend that I've made somebody else happy or have made an event for someone or have just connected with another person that I hadn't connected with before. And the passion that I have for baking and the love that I have For community and being able to mix those two things has honestly just kept me grounded and going as hard as I can.

[00:56:48] **David Crabill:** Well, thank you so much, Maci, for taking the time to come on and share with us today. Now, if someone would like to learn more about you, where can they find you? Or how can they reach out?

[00:57:02] **Maci Reed:** Yeah, absolutely. So on Facebook it is Bake a Reed on Instagram it is Bake a Reed, and on TikTok it is just my name, Maci Reed, and I can be found at all of those places.

[00:57:17] **David Crabill:** Awesome, well thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today.

[00:57:23] **Maci Reed:** Thank you David, for having me.

[00:57:27] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of the Forrager Podcast.

[00:57:30] For more information about this episode, go to forrager.com/podcast/131.

[00:57:37] And if you are enjoying this podcast, please take a quick moment right now and leave me your view on Apple Podcasts. It doesn't have to be a long review, but it's truly the best way to support this show and help others like you find this podcast.

[00:57:50] And finally, if you are 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.

[00:58:04] Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.