

Nurse Turned Jelly Maker — 50+ Flavors, 10 Stores, All From Her Home Kitchen

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 Halei Musil. But before we get started, this week I'm doing something a little bit different. This Thursday, I am giving a live workshop on how to start a cottage food business the right way.

I have seen so many entrepreneurs struggle to start their cottage food businesses, and honestly, a lot of them handicap themselves before they even get off the ground. So I thought, "What if I was trying to start a business over again today? What would I do?" That's what this workshop is going to be about.

It will be this Thursday, May 28th, 2026, and it is completely free to join. You just have to register, which you can do by going to forrager.com/workshop. And if you can't make it live, I will send a replay afterwards. Again, to register, go to forrager.com/workshop. I hope to see you there.

All right, so I have Halei Musil on the show today. She lives in Crescent, Oklahoma and sells jams and jellies with her cottage food business, Halei's Homemade. Halei never thought she would start a business, but after leaving her nursing career to stay home with her kids, she started making sand plum jelly, which is a local specialty in Oklahoma.

That led her to sell at a farmer's market, and people started asking what other flavors she had. As her business has grown over the past three years, she's created over 50 flavors and now sells at 10 wholesale locations. Halei's business has led to many unexpected opportunities and has been super successful for her personally.

But in this episode, we also dig into why businesses like hers are fairly uncommon. So with that, let's jump right in.

Welcome to the show, Haley. Nice to have you here.

Halei Musil: Thank you for having me on.

David Crabill: Well, Halei, can you take me back? How did this journey get started for you?

Halei Musil: Yeah. So, um, being a small business owner was not really part of my plan. I knew from the time I was in high school that I wanted to go into nursing, and so that was my career path. I was in nursing for over a decade. Um, I worked in an OBGYN clinic through COVID in 2020 when the world was changing. Uh, and then fast-forward into 2021, I became pregnant

with my second baby, and when I went on maternity leave, I decided it was just a good time to pause.

Um, I didn't have any plans to go back to work. I just wanted to focus on being a mom and staying home. So that's what I did for a little while. Um, again, I had no plans to start a business, but my family encouraged me to start making sand plum jelly. Um, and if you don't know what a sand plum is, it's a little red plum that's native to Oklahoma. They grow out here in the wild, in the pastures, and along, [00:03:00] uh, the fence rows and the roads and that type of thing.

Um, and so they said, "You know, you should go pick those and make jelly and do something with that." And so I thought, well, I have some, some free time on my hands, so that's what we did. I had learned to make sand plum jelly with my grandma probably 20 or 25 years ago. Uh, we just did it for a couple summers for fun, and I don't even think we were very good at it, but I had remembered us doing that, and I thought I should try that again and just see if there's any interest in sales.

And so, uh, we made it. I gave it to friends and family. They said, "Hey, this is pretty good." And so the next summer I did the same thing. We picked the plums. I made the jelly. I really just started selling at a farmers market in the next town over, and it became very popular. I met lots of people. Um, they invited me back in, uh, in the, the fall time to do a fall market, and I thought, I really don't have much sand plum jelly left.

I need to take something else. And so I came up with a Christmas jam, and it was very, very popular. And from there it just-- I started getting requests. [00:04:00] Can you make strawberry? Can you make blueberry? Um, and so I just started making it on the side as a hobby. Um, and I did that for a couple years, just in the summertime.

And my first retail opportunity came in August of 2024. There's a place called Lakeview Market in Yukon, Oklahoma, that is an agritourism center. They have a hub. They have animals outside to feed. Um, they have an outdoor market on the weekends for vendors. And so I was contacted and said, "Hey, we need a jelly person for our hub.

Are you interested?" And I said, "Oh, my gosh. I don't know. I don't know if I'm ready to jump into this business." But I thought about it and I thought, well, I've got nothing else going on. Let's give it a shot. And so I took my products in. They said, "Hey, what's your business name?" I said, "I don't, I don't know. I don't have a business name."

And they said, "Well, how about Hailey's Homemade?" And I said, "You know what? That works for me." So we went with it. That was my first retail location in 2024. Um, I picked up another, um, retail location called Jones Garden Center, which is right here in my hometown in Crescent, [00:05:00] in fall of 2024, and then also a boutique in my hometown at Dec- in December of 2024. And so I thought, this is really taking off. It's gaining traction. I probably need to make this official. And so in February of 2025, I became an officially registered business in the state of Oklahoma. Um, cons- sales have continued to grow since then. I now have 10 retail stores that I

am supplying to. Um, and at Lakeview Market, I delivered over 800 jars to that one location since August of 2024.

So I've stayed very busy, continued to grow, and now I have a Facebook page, and we're just on the up and up, and I'm really enjoying it.

David Crabill: Nice. Nice. Well, clearly you never planned to start a business. I think that's pretty clear, right?

Halei Musil: You read that as clear, yes.

David Crabill: I mean, you said your background is in nursing, and it's interesting because I know so many nurses, uh, or former nurses that have started a food business. What do you think, from your [00:06:00] background has helped you in this business journey?

Halei Musil: There's a trend now where people are wanting to know where their food is coming from. They're wanting to make healthier choices. Um, I think, you know, since COVID, eyes have been opened. We're paying more attention to our surroundings, to our environment. Um, and I think people just want to know, uh, you know, where their food is coming from and what is gonna be the best option for them.

And so it's kind of nice to be able to research ingredients, um, to use things that are locally grown. People feel that that's a healthier option. I feel like my background in nursing kind of makes me think that way. Um, and so I think that's really contributed to it, just caring for people, um, listening to people, knowing what they want, what they're interested in, and then using those locally grown items to make it happen.

David Crabill: Yeah, I know you, you mentioned that you, uh, were really listening to customers in the very beginning, right? Um, you started with this one item that people were telling you that you should make, right? And then, and then you got other customer requests. So, um, is [00:07:00] that kind of big part of how you've gotten off the ground so quickly, is that you've just been sort of doing everything for other people?

Like, is it, is it actually something that is for you, too, do you feel like?

Halei Musil: Yeah. I mean, the flexibility of my schedule is great. Being a stay-at-home mom and being able to work right here out of my home kitchen, it's the best of both worlds. Um, it's given me the opportunity to participate in my community, to give back, um, you know, to bring tax revenue in through having a business.

Um, it's really just the best of both worlds. Getting to communicate with the public, getting to meet people at farmers markets, um, getting to learn the business side of the retail stores, meeting with the owners, um, just learning how their businesses grow, what works well, what doesn't, um, how the economy can impact everybody's businesses.

It's really been eye-opening. It's not something that, um, you know, with my background in nursing, the business side of it was not really something that I knew about. And then when I became a nurse manager, [00:08:00] you, you kind of incorporate a little bit of that business into it and hiring and, um, you know, trends and that sort of thing.

But this is a whole different ballgame. Um, and so really just communicating with the public on what's needed, what they want, and how I can make that happen. It's really just a win-win for everybody,

David Crabill: Yeah. So, you know, you s- you had no former business background, no entrepreneurial experience. I guess you were, uh, a, a nurse manager, so you had a little bit of experience with that. But, what do you feel like has been the most challenging thing for learning the business aspect of running this?

Halei Musil: I would say, um, marketing. Marketing has been a, a learning curve. Um, self-promotion was not something that I was used to. Um, so learning how to market your business, how to learn what people are wanting and needing, um, how to connect with people. I've learned to do polls to get... Se- seek feedback, reviews.

we've done giveaways. Just engagement with [00:09:00] consumers, um, has been a big part of that. That's been a growing and learning experience. So somebody told me one time, "If you're gonna have a business page, you should post on it every day." And I thought, "How am I gonna come up with something to talk about every day that involves jelly?"

But over time, it has really evolved where I really like the consumer interaction. Um, and not only just promoting myself, but part of the retail stores that I'm in, I enjoy promoting their businesses as well and getting consumers going to their stores for different products, not just mine. Um, I have several stores that are mercantile-based, and so there are 80-plus vendors in those stores that are trying to grow their businesses as well.

And so using my networking platform to kinda help drive customers to those, those stores, those retail stores, the other vendors, um, that, that was a learning curve, but it's something that I have adapted to, I enjoy doing. Um, but marketing was a big one, social media. The second thing I would say is just supply chain.

Trying to find quality products like my jars, for example. [00:10:00] Um, looking at cost-effectiveness. We all know that the cost of everything is on the rise, and so trying to keep producing products that are in a consumer price point that is manageable, and try to keep my budget down as best as possible, like that has been a challenge for me.

Um, but trying to use, again, those, those locally grown products are cheaper or even free. Sometimes people give them to me because they just like my business model and what I'm doing with it. And so that helps to keep the cost down as well. But trying to find that balance was tricky in the beginning

David Crabill: Yeah, you mentioned the, referring to other people and, and, uh, mentioning other people on social media, and I noticed that that was something that really stood out to me with your Facebook page is that, you know, you, you do post a lot of your own content, but you also repost and share a lot of other, uh, businesses' content in your local area.

So I'd imagine that's been a big part of kind of helping grow your business and grow your brand, right?

Halei Musil: [00:11:00] Yes, absolutely. I think it's a unique community, especially the, the mercantiles, the hubs that are popping up all over in small towns in Oklahoma. It just becomes a unique community where you see a lot of the same vendors and the same stores, and you just learn to network and connect and just share what we're doing and what makes us unique.

Um, other finds at the stores, like I mentioned, not just my products, but with someone else's. I think it's a cool thing that we can just be a community to support each other.

David Crabill: And, you know, y-you said that marketing has been one of your biggest learning curves, but I saw that you didn't start your Facebook page till the end of 2024, you know. And I know you started selling your j- uh, jams in 2022. You were growing the business in 2023 and 2024. So what do you feel like, if you go back to the beginning of your business, what do you feel like were the things that you needed to learn marketing-wise to help grow?

Or, or do you feel like it just grew on its own? [00:12:00] Do you feel like you didn't have to do any marketing?

Halei Musil: both. I feel like in the beginning I really was just posting on my personal Facebook page, and it was just kind of a seasonal summer farmers market type thing. Um, it was just a hobby, so it wasn't really something I focused on or thought I would be marketing in the future. And then as it grew, people would ask me, "Well, where will you be set up next?

And what flavors do you have coming out next?" And that's kind of where the Facebook page started from. Um, and then I just began posting to keep my customers informed and, um, it just kind of took off from there. But really it was just word of mouth and physical interaction in the early days. It wasn't so much the social media marketing.

David Crabill: So would you say it was pretty much the farmers market that you were at that helped take this whole thing off,

Halei Musil: Absolutely, yes. That very first farmers market, um, it was in Mulhall, which is another small town that's, uh, just, just located outside of Crescent. Um, and that's where I started was in that farmers market, and it was very small. There was maybe 10 vendors that set [00:13:00] up. Um, but you would see the same faces over and over, and you would hear stories, and they would tell their friends, and then you had people coming from the next town to do it.

And, um, uh, then Crescent got their farmers market up and running again, so I started there. I went to Cashion, which is another small town in our area, um, and just started learning to network and meet people. And then when that retail opportunity came up That's when I kind of started growing with it and saying, "I need to market."

I'm... The retail location was in Yukon, which is an hour from me, and so I don't have a lot of connections in that area. And that's where the social media networking and marketing really started to take off.

David Crabill: You might have mentioned this briefly at the beginning, but why did you decide to take the jellies or jams to the market in the first place? Like, why'd you decide to do that very first market?

Halei Musil: Yeah. So, um, as I mentioned, it was on my Facebook page, and I had a few private sales, just some neighbors and things. Like I'll buy a jar here, I'll buy a jar there. So sand plum jelly is the [00:14:00] gold standard in Oklahoma. It's the jelly to have. Our sand plums don't always produce. They're not like yearly.

Sometimes if there's a freeze or something that's late, it will kill them off. And so when sand plums are available, everybody wants the sand plums. And I knew it was popular. I knew it was something that people would be looking for. Um, and since my hometown didn't have a farmers market at the time because of the COVID shutdown and everything, um, when Mulhall had theirs, I decided it was close to home.

I know some people over there. I wanted to meet more people. And so that was just kind of my first stepping stone. Again, just to make some money on the side. I never envisioned it being a business. It was just a hobby. And, um, I just wanted to connect with the other hobbyists in the area and just try something new, so.

David Crabill: What makes a sand plum so special?

Halei Musil: Oh, just it's Oklahoma. Just plain and simple, it's Oklahoma. They're a tart little plum. Um, again, they don't produce every year. And so, um, when they do, it's, it's hard work to get [00:15:00] them. They grow in thickets. They have lots of thorns around them. Um, in our area, snakes, ticks, you know, the hazards that come with the job.

And so not everybody is willing to go and harvest them. Um, and so then when you get them, it is a process. You have to clean them and boil them and juice them down and take the, the seed and the pulp out just to get the juice to make the jelly. So it's a lot of work to get the end product, but it's so worth it.

It's so good. It tastes good. It's beautiful. It's clear. It's a dark pink color. Um, and again, around here, like that's what everybody looks for is sand plum jelly.

David Crabill: That's actually one of the things that is the, like the biggest challenge with a jelly business, right? I mean, you can sell jellies for a decent price, but the labor that it takes to

actually make the jelly is crazy. And so, um, and, and where were you actually getting your sand plums? It sounds like you were just, you were getting them for free.

Is that right?

Halei Musil: [00:16:00] Yeah, so they actually grow just out here behind the house in the field. There's lots and lots of sand plum bushes out here. And so we just go out behind the house to pick them. Um, I live in an area where a mile section around me is all family land, and so they just grow wild. And so where we can find a bush, we just pick and pick and pick.

It was Probably like every other night in the summer we would get a five-gallon bucket, and it takes a whole lot to make a little. And so you're right, it's very labor-intensive. Um, you're out there for a couple hours in the heat and the humidity just to gather the product. Um, but it, it's nice because it also keeps the cost down when you have a product that's wild and natural and just available right here close to home.

So it's the best.

David Crabill: Yeah. I mean, so you're obviously saving on costs in terms of not having to buy the product, but you are still basically buying it in your own labor, right? And, and

how difficult it is to actually get it off of the bush and get it clean and get it processed. Um, have you done [00:17:00] that, like, math to figure out, like, you know...

And I know you do way more than that. I know you've done over 50 flavors now. You've, I'm sure you buy a lot of produce. But, um, like, you know, the, the economic viability of a jelly business is one thing that I always think about because, um, it- it's hard. It's a lot of work to produce just a little bit of jelly, right?

So what has that been like?

Halei Musil: Um, I haven't done the cost recently. I did as I was creating new flavors just to kinda see which ones would cost more and less. Um, I feel like the profit margins are still there, but again, as things continue to rise, you have to kinda stop and reevaluate that. And if you were to completely just take labor out of it, the profit looks okay, but like you said, when you, you're spending a couple hours a week on the outside just gathering the product and cleaning the product, all the behind-the-scenes that people don't see, um, you know, that does add up.

It [00:18:00] does add up in labor. It makes the profit margins much smaller in the end. Um, and it really is a labor of love just to produce a good product for your consumers. There's not a ton of money to be made in this business, um, not on this small scale. But, um, that's okay. I still enjoy the s- the small business side of it, the customer interaction, and again, just giving people a product that's grown naturally that's not covered in pesticides or any other things that they think might be harmful to their bodies.

It's just as local as you can get.

David Crabill: I, I saw somewhere you said that this was not initially a passion for you. You know, y- it's not like you've always loved making jams and jellies, right? Um, so when do you feel like it became a passion for you?

Halei Musil: Um, so like I mentioned, my grandma and I made it a few summers when I was in high school I think, and it was just, just for fun. Um, she had some concord grapes that her sister actually grew, and then again, the sand plums grew on their property. So it was [00:19:00] just kind of what we had to play with. And again, I, it seems like it was very syrupy.

I don't think it ever really turned into like a good jelly. And so it was just kinda one of those things, like in the kitchen for fun. And then I went on with life. Um, and then again, when I was home and I started making the sand plum, and I just saw How it lit people up. And I never thought one little product like a jar of jelly would do that.

But when I was able to go to farmer's markets and talk to people, it just brought out stories in people. "My grandma used to make this," or, "I remember making this with my grandma," or, "I haven't tasted this in years, and this just brought back so many memories for me." And it was really that that really just pushed me, the heartwarming stories, the local community giving back that just really pushed me to just do this hardcore.

David Crabill: So do you feel like the passion was the community element? Like you're passionate about connecting with your community or do you feel like you're also passionate about making [00:20:00] all these jellies and all the work that that takes? Do you like-- Do you enjoy the process?

Halei Musil: do. I think it's a little bit of both. Community definitely drives me. Um, being from a small town, that's all I know is community. Um, and so again, being able to get something that grows right here in my backyard on land that's been in our family for years, that means a lot to me. The heart of the community is just everything local.

Um, so that is a big part of it. But I do enjoy being creative and trying to come up with new flavor ideas. Um, again, just interacting with people. It's all part of it. I enjoy s- in the kitchen making jelly. It can be a lot of work some days. Um, if I'm making lots and lots of batches, I am in the kitchen all day.

Um, but again, there's just not a whole lot that gives you the opportunity to be at home and to do something you love and have flexibility. And so just putting it all together, it's just the best of both worlds.

David Crabill: Yeah, it's a lot of work. And as you said, you have a couple kids. I know you have a couple fairly young kids. How old are your kids?

Halei Musil: Nine and four.

David Crabill: [00:21:00] and four. Yeah. Well, especially the four-year-old, you know, is

still Yes.

it, it's still gonna take up, uh, I'd imagine a fair amount of your time. I have a, a five and a six-year-old at home, and so, uh, yeah, I know, I know what that's like, and it's hard.

And this is, um, you know, they're f- she's four now, right? So, you know, pre-stepping back three years or so, um, you know, y-you're essentially building this business with a one-year-old, a two-year-old, right? What's that been like?

Halei Musil: very challenging. Very challenging. In the early days when things were slow and I just had a couple flavors, you know, it wasn't a big deal. I could knock it all out in a day and have enough product to last a few weeks. Now, as we have grown through that, where I'm producing lots of different flavors and keeping my shelf stocked in case somebody needs something, um, and having her, she's been at home with me the whole time, which was different because with my son, I was working full-time as a nurse.

And so that was a learning experience in [00:22:00] itself, just to be a stay-at-home mom and deal with all the things where people need you at all hours of the day. But then to start growing this business, it was incredibly challenging to give her the attention and time she needed But also have a product that you can't just walk away from the stove in the middle of jelly making.

You have to give it its time and attention as well. And not only that, but the steps involved in prepping your jars and the water bath afterwards. It's a very long process that you can't just walk away from. So I think that's been the most difficult thing is just time management, trying to figure out how to work it.

This year, she actually started a half-day pre-K. So as soon as the kids were dropped off, I came home, got busy in the kitchen, got my product done, and then I would go pick her up. And then after everything was cooled, then I could go back to doing my labeling and my social media and things like that when she was with me.

But definitely a work in progress over the years as things have grown. I've stayed very busy.

David Crabill: Well, it, yeah, I mean, it's interesting 'cause you didn't, like, [00:23:00] necessarily want a business, right? It wasn't something you were actively seeking out. Um, it-- So when do you feel like you shifted and decided, "You know, I really wanna pursue this and I wanna make it bigger"? You know, because obviously you, you had priorities at home too with your daughter.

Halei Musil: Well, I think I've always been very goal-driven. Like I said, when I was in high school, I knew I was going to go to nursing school. And I graduated nursing school when I was 21 years old and went right back to school to obtain a bachelor's degree. And then I started working full-time. And as I was in the nursing field, when I switched over to a nursing educator role, I put myself back in school full-time while working full-time.

And at that time, my son was not quite two and still not sleeping well. And I enrolled in a master's program and then COVID hit and I got bumped up to manager. And so I was managing all the things at once in that career. So I'm really no stranger to the multitasking and the high levels of stress that come with things.

And honestly, I just don't like to be bored. So it just seemed [00:24:00] like, oh, this could be a goal for me. And when I had the interaction with customers and I had success in my hometown, not only at farmer's markets, but at the garden center, just a lot of positive feedback kind of pushed me in that direction to say, I think this door has opened for a reason.

And so I walked through it and it's just been growth ever since.

David Crabill: So you left nursing when you had your daughter Um, and why did you choose to leave nursing? 'Cause obviously you were, you were, um, still working when you had your son,

Halei Musil: right. Yep. And I worked all the way up until maternity leave. And that's when I officially made the decision to take a pause. And I think at that time there was just so many job duties. It was consuming early mornings before I could get my son to school. I did my eight hour day. I would come home and I still had emails from physicians and just business things.

I did our scheduling, time off, the hiring. I had a part in all of it, training new hires. And it was just [00:25:00] a lot. And it was just really stressful. The world was still a little bit crazy in 2021. Um, and after COVID, I mean, there was just a little bit of burnout, and it was just more of I want my time at home to be my time at home.

I don't wanna be working for somebody else when I'm at home. Um, and so I think that kind of just encouraged me to take a look at what was important. Um, we had some illnesses and things in the family during COVID, and it just really put things in perspective, like what do I wanna do right now? How can I do things differently than I did with my son?

Um, and we were in a position to where I was able to stop working and just focus on being a mom, and it just seemed to work out best for our family at the time. And then when this came along, it also gave me the flexibility that I can be done for the day, I can pick my kids up from school, um, I can attend all their events during the day, field trips, that kind of thing.

So I can work around it a little bit, and I think that's what's been the biggest motivator in continuing to grow this.

David Crabill: So when you decide [00:26:00] to leave nursing, did you think that was gonna be temporary until, say, your daughter got into grade school? Like, did you foresee yourself going back into nursing eventually?

Halei Musil: Yeah, I did. Um, I thought about it. I didn't know if I would go back to where I was or if I would, you know, try a different field in nursing, but I thought surely with, with all of the education and experience I had, I probably wouldn't just leave it to the side. But I also had no

immediate plans. I just thought we will see when the time comes what doors open and where I'm supposed to go.

And, um, you know, she'll be starting full-time school in the fall, but I have no intention yet on going back to nursing. This has been a great opportunity for me, um, and I'm really enjoying being able to manage my home, manage this business, grow something from the ground up myself. Um, it's just been very rewarding.

So I'm not really missing that rewarding aspect. I have that with this.

David Crabill: Yeah, that's what I was wondering is like, has this business ki- kinda came out of nowhere. It wasn't something you asked for, but has it essentially changed [00:27:00] what you thought you were gonna do with your life? Sounds like it has.

Halei Musil: Yeah, I think so. I think so. Um, I really always wanted to have community involvement, and where I was working was in Oklahoma City, so it's a 40-minute drive one way just to get to work and then 40 minutes home. Um, and I did that for 10 years, and it was just... It's just a lot of time out of your day, a lot of extra time that you're not spending with your kids, not spending with your family.

Um, and so like I said, this has just been the biggest blessing to be able to stay home and do it, um, to not only just grow the business, but to help grow my community. So I recently joined our chamber of commerce, and so I'm able to network with other businesses. Um, like I mentioned before, I have retail in, in three stores in our town.

And so that's pretty big to be in a town of 1,500 to have three locations and not, you know, burn people out or not have sales. I always have sales. And so my small community has been very supportive in my success, um, and I'll just keep on trucking with it, so...

David Crabill: [00:28:00] Yeah, 'cause you said you're from a small town, right? Yeah, and so, you know, community has always been a part of your life. But how do you feel like your relationship with your community has changed as you've built this business?

Halei Musil: Yeah. Um, I think I have more interaction. So when I was working outside of Crescent in Oklahoma City, you don't have the day-to-day seeing people on Main Street, checking your mail, like small town life. You just work and come home. Um, and there wasn't just a ton of room to be involved outside of that. And now that I'm able to be in my town during the day, in and out of stores, talking with neighbors, talking with residents, talking with customers, um, I really think that that's just helped grow my business, and it's just really filled a place in my heart to be part of the community.

Not just say, "I'm from Crescent," but to really live here, thrive here, be involved in decision-making, be involved in the chamber events. Um, just kind of learn their perspective, what are their struggles, what are their successes, what are [00:29:00] their goals? And to be around like-minded people, um, where we're all from this small community, it's just the greatest thing.

David Crabill: So let's talk about your product a little bit, 'cause I know you started with the sand plum jelly, and then you said you added a Christmas jam, um, and then you said people started to request flavors. So what were, like, the first flavors that people started to request or what have become, like, say, your most popular flavors?

Halei Musil: Uh, so strawberry, just plain strawberry, was one of my first requests, as well as blueberry. Um, grape. Just kind of your traditional plain Jane flavors. But then over time, they got a little more exotic and a little more fun. So something that has become very popular recently is strawberry peach. Um, it sells everywhere.

It's just so good. But really, what started driving the popular flavors was the locally grown products. When I could say, "I picked these blackberries," people wanted the blackberry. When I [00:30:00] said, "Hey, here's the sand plums," people want the sand plums. Um, last summer I had three different people in my area that donated peaches to me from their area.

Um, and so again, that kept price point down, but I was able to use free product for kind of research development, if you will, to, to kind of trial new flavors, and that's where like vanilla peach and bourbon peach, and those types of flavors bloomed from. So really just using what was available kind of started how I went with my creative process. And then over time, it's just kind of developed what do people wanna try.

Um, the pepper jellies have become very popular, and we had tons of jalapenos that grew right out here in my garden last year. So all of the jalapeno pepper jellies are from my garden. Um, so again, just locally based ingredients and products seems to drive what flavors are the most popular. I think, um, strawberry jalapeno has become the most popular pepper jam.

Um, it's won several awards at the local county fair level. [00:31:00] And then last year, along with my sand plum jelly, I had a raspberry lemon jelly that won first place at the Oklahoma State Fair also. Just

David Crabill: Yeah, I saw that you've had those, uh, those, uh, many awards at the fairs, right? Yeah, we can see them in the background there. and so, you know, w- uh, I mean, what is it about your jelly that's, you know, obviously excellent and beating out other jellies from, you know... I mean, even at the state fair, you got two blue ribbons, right?

So, like, what is it about your jelly that you think makes it so good?

Halei Musil: made with love. I, I don't know. I, I try really hard to make sure that every product is quality. Um, you know, when you're judging jellies, having a crystal clear jelly is one of the top ways to win, and so I make sure that my product is strained multiple times, um, just that I'm using quality ingredients, that I'm not cutting corners.

That's really all I do, and it's been successful. [00:32:00] And so I, I just think it's, it's a sign that it's what I'm supposed to be doing, that it's something that I wasn't good at once upon a time, but I've kind of grown to be good at it. And it's still a challenge because things can still go wrong. You can know how to do jelly and still have a flavor sometimes that doesn't set up.

And so there's always that element of surprise, too, that you're not expecting, or if your jars don't seal or, you know, something like that. But, um, really I just try not to cut corners. I try to make a product that is going to taste good, that has quality ingredients, um, and just go from there.

David Crabill: Are you often, like, following a standardized recipe, like from a blue book, or are you just kind of figuring it out based on your own knowledge of how the science works?

Halei Musil: Yeah, a little bit of both. Um, I usually start with a base recipe that I could find, um, and try it and see if it works or if it doesn't. There's been times where I'm like, you know, maybe this isn't as flavorful. Maybe it needs more jalapenos or something like that, where you're just trying to adjust it a little bit.[00:33:00]

Um, but usually I try to start with a base flavor, or if I have a true flavor like strawberry, where I know it works for me every time, I'm gonna take that recipe and then just add a little bit more, like jalapeno or whatever the product might be. My peach recipe, add a little bourbon to it and it seems to work.

And so I've just made notes. I have printed recipes that I use, but they are covered in chicken scratch because as I've done the trial and error thing, I'm making notes on what worked and what didn't And just going from there.

David Crabill: You said something interesting that people have, uh, like really demand the products that are local. Like when you say, "Oh, I picked this myself," or, you know, "I got this from someone," then that's the flavor that they want. D- is it, is the demand, like a really strong demand for local products in particular or, um, is it, are those flavors just like tasting better so that's the one that they choose?

Like is it your, like, advertising of them as like [00:34:00] handpicked that is what causes them to sell better?

Halei Musil: Uh, I think so. I, again, I think people like to know where their food's coming from, and it's not just, you know, the products that are here on my property. Um, I have a lady I work with who's about 10 miles from me that she grows blackberries, apples, pears, and she goes through the process of juicing them, making sure that the ingredients stay whole and natural and not, you know, processed or with anything added.

And so we have a good working relationship where I can purchase from her, and I have the juice ready for me. So that takes out a lot of that labor-intensive process on my end, and it also gives me a chance to support someone else that's local, and then share those local products with our local community.

And so I think anytime you can advertise something local, um, I think that helps to drive sales. I don't think people necessarily come to me and say, you know, "We want this." But, um, when you have that and you can make that available, that's what people tend to gravitate to.

David Crabill: Have there been any flavors that you were like, "I, I really want to make this flavor," and then it [00:35:00] just did not work?

Halei Musil: Um, oh, yeah. I, once I tried to do a blueberry lemon. I thought that would be really good, but every time I tried it, it was super runny. It just did not work for me, and I gave up on that one. I've also had a couple people request, like, low sugar jams, and I've tried those, and I used a different kind of pectin, and it was just very time-consuming, and it didn't work out, and the price points were really high, and I just decided that was probably not an avenue I was going to go down.

I'm always willing to try something once, so.

David Crabill: Uh, conversely, have there been products that you thought worked well and they just did not sell?

Halei Musil: Yes. So it's interesting, like white grape jelly, for example. You know, you have your standard grape, and everybody likes grape. Everybody can get grape. It's nothing special. But when I saw white grape, I thought, "That's, that's a little bit different." I called it the adult version of our peanut butter and jellies.

Like, you sound a little more sophisticated using a [00:36:00] white grape jelly. So, uh, that was juice that was grown locally. I used that, and it was super popular for like a month, and then it just died. I don't know what happened with it. It tasted really good. It was very popular, and then it just stopped. And so I have a bunch of that on the shelf because it's just not something I'm restocking everywhere, but I've had a few things that were flops the first time, and then I remarketed them and tried again a second time, and they were very popular.

And one of those was, uh, cherry habanero. It's very popular right now. I marketed it as a cherry bomb with jalapenos the first time, and it just didn't go anywhere. But when I added habaneros and I renamed it Cherry Habanero, it's one of my most popular flavors now.

David Crabill: Interesting. So are you-- I, I mean, I know you've got a lot of flavors, dozens of flavors. Are you, uh, rotating flavors out and bringing flavors in on a consistent basis? Like saying like, "Hey, this is your last chance to get this flavor," that [00:37:00] kind of thing?

Halei Musil: Yes. So I'm really big on using what's seasonal and what's fresh. And so there are flavors that I'm producing throughout the year that are only available for a limited time. Um, so for example, around Thanksgiving, I'm doing cranberry jalapeno, cranberry orange. Once cranberries stop coming in, that's the end of that one.

And so then you move into whatever is next, um, you know, whatever's seasonal at the time. So it's just like the sand plums. Everyone knows to get it because, again, it's not gonna produce every year, and they only last about a month or so before they die off. And so everybody knows, like, when those sand plums are out, we need to get that jelly.

Um, but I try to look at what's, what's popular. Like, the Christmas jam has cranberries in it, so it's obviously popular at Christmas. I make a gingerbread jelly at Christmastime. Um, so my customers do know there are certain things that are only going to be on the shelf, um, for a limited time, while everything else is just kind of a staple.

I'm always bringing apple butter. I'm always bringing, you know, blueberry, whatever it is.

David Crabill: do you ever [00:38:00] intentionally pull something off just to like, you know, boost the sales for that, you know, and then bring it back on later, even if you have it in stock?

Halei Musil: Um, I mean, I c- I can. I've pulled stuff before that I thought just was not moving and moved it to a different store, and it did way better. So with each retail location, I have different flavors, so it's not necessarily like I'm taking the exact same thing to every store. It's really interesting to see how the markets differ, this location, pepper jams might be very popular, and at this location, people are wanting just strawberry and cherry and just traditional flavors.

And so I've had to make a lot of changes to what works based on location. Um,

I have so many flavors right now that I really haven't been able to just rotate through all of them before bringing a specific flavor back. So, um, probably, I probably will rotate those back in at some point, but I'm still kind of working through my list of flavors right now

David Crabill: so the [00:39:00] flavors you take to certain locations, I know you have 10 wholesale locations. Those, are, are those just based on what's selling there? Or do you want them to like have different flavors so that people, you know, have a different experience at different locations?

Halei Musil: Right. Um, so it just kind of depends on the business and the owner and what they're looking for and how they want to drive sales to their store. Um, so in a couple of my stores I do a flavor of the month, and so I bring in a new flavor that's on the shelf for a limited time, and then at the end of the month I'm pulling it, and then, you know, keeping the base flavors there at the same time.

So it gives customers a chance to come in and try this flavor this month, this flavor next month. And also just to see if there's a certain flavor that just really takes off and we think we need it there full time. It's kind of that trial and error phase of seeing, you know, what will work best. At Lakeview Market in Yukon, I take 24 jars every time I go, and it's really just kind of dealer's choice on that.

I just pick what I have the most of and what I see is trending. [00:40:00] A lot of the, um, traditional flavors like the blackberry and things like that sell really good down there. And so those are always a staple on my list, but if I have seasonal flavors I'll rotate those in. Um, or if there's something that I haven't taken before, that's a good chance to kinda try it out there.

Um, I have a great customer base down there. My, my jellies always sell out in that location and so, um, about once or twice a month I'm just taking product down there and trying something

else and, um, I keep everything on spreadsheets so I know what I've taken where and can kinda look and just put the puzzle pieces together to see what's next and, you know, what flavor I want to plan for the next month.

David Crabill: So I know it was a couple years ago you started doing wholesale at the market, and now you've expanded up to 10 locations. You started the business with farmers markets. Um, is, is wholesale what's allowed your business to take off? You know, like it... I mean, you could have theoretically done more farmers markets, right?

But, um, and I, and [00:41:00] maybe you're still doing those, I don't know. But, you know, it, it sounds like it's wholesale kind of what's allowed your business to scale

Halei Musil: Absolutely. I think it's the marketing, um, the networking with small hub owners. They communicate. They use a lot of the same vendors in their stores. Um, so if you can kind of build a good sales reputation in one store, it's likely that someone else will kind of be looking your way to bring you into their store.

Um, the farmers markets, again they were great, um, just to be able to set up and talk to people on a face-to-face basis, um, to not have to share, um, any like consignment costs or any commission or anything like that, like everything goes home in your pocket same day, but it's also a lot of work to load up your products, to set up your table.

Um, it could be hit or miss at those markets. You may have a great weekend and then next weekend no one shows up. Um, so it's not super sustainable long term Although there were pros to it. And so I just felt like having retail stores, it was a better way to make plans if I'm going to need to restock once a month [00:42:00] or every other week.

I can fit that into my schedule with being flexible at home. Um, and that has helped me to plan ahead and say, "What days do I have something going on with the kids, and what days do I need to be in the kitchen getting my stock built back up?"

David Crabill: Yeah, I mean, that's the tricky thing with wholesale, right? Obviously, there's a lot of conveniences to it, but the costs and the margins are significantly reduced, and we already know that jams and jellies are a low-margin product to begin with. So, I mean, h-have-- how, how has the pricing of that been and working with stores?

I mean, how have you made that work, or what have you learned?

Halei Musil: Yeah. Um, you know, I know it costs a lot to have a brick and mortar store, and bless these hub owners that do this around here because it is a lot of work, it's a lot of communication, it's a lot of marketing. Um, you know, they have their own money invested, so I absolutely understand the commission side of it from their perspective.

From my perspective, it [00:43:00] can be hard as a small business owner because again, you want to keep your products within a certain price point. Because I know that no one's gonna pay

\$15 for a jar of jelly, and at the same time I have the rising cost of product, I have commission to consider coming off of the profit margin, um, and there's not a lot of wiggle room.

There's really not to work with. And so something that's been a blessing for me is in my hometown is where I have the lowest commission rates, and that allows my products to be priced a little bit lower than in some of my other locations that have higher commission rates. So it's really just kind of based on that.

My price will fluctuate a little bit. Um, you know, purchasing directly from me is going to be the cheapest route for the consumer. Um, but if you're going to one of my retail stores, it could be anywhere from \$9 or \$10 up to 12 or 13 depending on the product and the location.

David Crabill: I know that when you, like, started this business, you were in a financially stable point, position because obviously you left your job, you know, for a couple years before you even started it. [00:44:00] and, I was thinking about the wholesale sales, and if you've ever calculated out what you actually make per hour on those

sales, right? because I, I, I mean, it's, it's something you love doing. I know you provide for your community and everything. Um, but have you ever priced that out? Like, how much are you actually getting paid? Like, what's your, the extra leftover per hour of work?

Halei Musil: A, it's not a lot. It's like probably a few bucks, to be honest. I calculated it out one time and then I thought, "I really don't wanna look at that again." Because it, it's kind of scary. It's not something that is going to make me a millionaire. It's not something I'm going to get rich doing. And at this point in my life, like I'm okay with where it's at, and keeping it small scaled is where I want to be.

Because the community part, it means more to me than the financial part, and I honestly think that that is what has made my business successful. You know, I'm not trying to get rich and make millions. I'm just trying to have a little money on the side to do stuff with the kids and, [00:45:00] and this business has provided that.

It's been successful enough that the profit margin is there to continue doing it. Um, but you're right. When you factor into labor and all of those things, it's, it's really not much. People would be surprised at how little it actually is back in your pocket.

David Crabill: Below minimum wage, so you might as well go get a job at a fast food place, right? So, I mean, I know it's been, uh... From, from the outside looking in, right, it, it's a very successful business. You know, you've sold thousands of jars, and you've, you know, you're growing into different wholesale locations, and you got all this community involvement.

Um, but at the end of the day, like, would you recommend someone start a jam and jelly business as a cottage food business?

Halei Musil: Um, I think it depends on what their goals are. I would say generally speaking, yes, if somebody wants to do it, there's lots and lots of pros to doing it, like I've mentioned the

community and the flexibility and the schedule. But they should know it is hard work. [00:46:00]
Um, it's going to take lots of hours out of your time.

It's rewarding, but it's not super financially profitable like we just discussed. Um, I think if I was going to encourage someone else to start it, I would say, number one, really do your homework in your area. I see a lot of oversaturation right now in the hubs with, you know, breads and that kind of thing, where there's just so many people bringing in the same product.

And if the demand from consumers is not there, it's not going to be successful. So you have to find ways to make your product stand out, to make your business unique, um, to try to put a twist to do something that no one else is doing, or to find an area where it's not oversaturated. Oh,

David Crabill: Hey, real quick, as I mentioned at the beginning, I am giving a live workshop this Thursday, May 28th about how I would start a cottage food business if I was starting over again today. It's the first time I've given it this year and it's completely free to join, but you have to register, which you [00:47:00] can do by going to forrager.com/workshop.

And if you can't make it live, I will send a replay afterwards. Again, register by going to forrager.com/workshop. Now back to the show.

I know you want to keep your business small. You like where it's at. You know, you've got a four-year-old at home. Um, do you feel like your business could become A, like, a profitable business, like could pay you a legitimate wage. Like, what do you think it would take to get it to that level? Where you could hire someone to produce the product for you, right?

Because that's the point at which a business is really, has its own legs to stand on.

Halei Musil: Right. I honestly haven't given that too much thought because I really don't see it going to a commercial scale. Um, we do have some commercially, uh, commercial businesses that do the same thing that I do here in the state. [00:48:00] Um, and those names are well-known around the state, and some of the retail stores I'm in also carry commercial products. And that can be very hard to compete with those price point wise because obviously they're able to mass produce, um, for a little bit cheaper rate than I am.

Um, but what I think makes my business stand out is that it's just me making every single jar that hits the shelf. So if there's an issue or someone has something great to say, like it's coming directly to me, and that means the most to me. Um, that's kind of my love language is just making things from my kitchen for people that I love.

And so, um, it just fulfills that part of me that I really honestly would not want to give up. I like knowing that that product came directly from me in my kitchen. Um, and so that's what I plan to do is just keep it the smaller scale.

David Crabill: I know, uh, you know, at one point we're doing \$9 a jar. You've been doing mostly \$10 a jar now. It sounds like that could bump up to 12 or 13 depending on the flavor. But have

you-- I mean, \$10 is a very convenient price, you know. Like, you know, it's easy. [00:49:00] Um, have you played around with increasing it more just so you have more to reinvest into your business?

Halei Musil: I have. So when I first started, I did \$8 a jar directly from me. Um, I did a 3 for \$20 pricing to try to get people to try new flavors and be creative with that. After last year, I had to drop the 3 for \$20 because the price, it, it was just-- there was no profit to be made there. And so in my retail stores in my hometown where I have the smaller commission, we still do a 3 for \$25, or they're \$9 individually.

And so there's still that, um, that push to, to save when you buy more and they get to try more flavors. And I'm able to do that here in my hometown. At some of the other stores with a higher price point, um, \$10 seems to be a good point. My stores where it's \$11, it's a little bit slower in sales. Um, my store where I have \$12 jams, those are honey jams, and the honey is local and, uh, raw.

It costs a little bit more to make [00:50:00] those, to purchase that honey, and so that's why those are priced a little bit higher. But generally speaking, I try to keep my price points the same for everything except honey jams in a specific retail location

David Crabill: Man, you know, my, my wheels are spinning here. I'm thinking about, um, you know, if people are a little bit more hesitant to buy at the \$11 price point I'm thinking about, you know, if you had them on the shelf at eleven dollars individually, but then you had a three for thirty. Um, I don't know if you tried that, but that's where you potentially could still sell them at the ten-dollar price point, but instead of only selling one jar, you could be selling three at a time.

Halei Musil: I haven't gone up, up yet past the \$25 range. Um, but something else that we've done to be creative is in only one, one location here in Crescent, I also do some sampler size jars for half the price of the bigger jars. Um, I've put together some gift sets, and those have really taken off to just do, you [00:51:00] know, whatever flavors I have.

It's very easy for me to make them, um, because sometimes you, you're making a batch of jelly and you just don't have enough to fill an eight-ounce jar, and you don't wanna pour it down the sink after all that work. So if you fill up your four-ounce jar, and I just set them to the side, I can label them as I go.

Um, and then I make gift sets out of them. So people can try sampler, smaller versions at a cheaper price point, um, and it's not wasted product on my end. Um, so I've tried to repurpose those as well and give people a chance to just try random flavors.

David Crabill: Hmm. You said you sell them at half price, but you would think you would sell them at a little bit more than half price because you still have the cost of the jar and everything to... and the, the labor and all that, right?

Halei Musil: Yeah. So there's still profit margin on what I'm making on the big jars. And so there's still profit margin on the smaller. I'm not doing anything extra, just buying a different size

jar. Um, the product is the same. You're just, instead of an eight-ounce jar, you're pouring it into a four-ounce jar. And so, um, the labeling and stuff, I'm still doing all of that [00:52:00] myself.

There's not really additional cost with that. Um, so it allows me to do it a little bit cheaper to give people the chance to buy some random jars just to try. Um, it's worked really well in our hometown, and like I said, the gift sets have kind of taken off and I've been able to put those in several retail stores in Oklahoma City. And so now people are getting a bigger chance to try, to try my items.

David Crabill: Let's talk about jars a little bit because, uh, I feel like you started this late enough that you probably missed the, I don't know what it was called, the jar pandemic or whatever it was, you know, where people could not get any, right.

glass. Um, but, you know, what, what has been your experience with actually getting jars and, and where, where do you source them?

Halei Musil: So I was using a wholesale website, and it was working out really great. The shipping was very high, but the price of the jars was pretty decent compared to what I had seen, like, at Walmart and, you know, local stores. And so I was able to get those jars within a day or two [00:53:00] because there was a shipping facility out of southern Oklahoma.

So I was able to get them really quick when I needed them, and it was going great until it wasn't. Um, and that's the month that I had a ton of jars that arrived broken, um, some that didn't seal, and so now you're trying to contact the company and it's taking more time out of your day. And eventually I ended up switching because I just thought I cannot keep wasting product.

I had so much wasted money that year. Um, and so I started looking and honestly like Amazon has been the easiest, quickest way to get my jars. They are at a price point that is a little higher than I would prefer. Um, but right now the convenience for needing hundreds and hundreds of jars in a hurry has paid off.

Um, so that's what I'm doing right now, but I'm still always researching other companies. It's just the shipping cost is so high with those that if you find a cheaper jar, the shipping cost will offset that. And so, um, Amazon seems to be the best place. The jars work really well. Everything is sealing good.

I've got a good thing going right now, so I don't plan to change it yet.

David Crabill: Have you ever done a jar return system?

Halei Musil: Um, so one of my local retailers, Gregory Mercantile here in Crescent, they have a recycle program. And so if you bring the clean jars back to them, they will get them to me and you also get a store credit. So it's been a really, a really good win-win. There's not a ton of interaction with that, but for the people who do, they get something out of it too.

So that helps. I have a lot of customers who just give the jars back to me when they're done also, and I repurpose those.

David Crabill: Okay. You know, One of the things I saw, uh, on Facebook on one of your photos is that on your shelf at, at least one of your stores, you have like a placard with your story. I assume it's your story, and like your faith and everything. Is that something that you do at all stores?

Halei Musil: No, I actually only have it at a few. Um, really the newer stores that I've, I've come into, I'm finding that people like that personal connection. And so if I'm not physically able to be in that town or around that store much, it gives them a way to connect to my [00:55:00] social media page and also learn a little bit about me, um, who I am, why I make the product.

Um, and I think that also helps to draw customers in, just having that personal connection. So it's not at every store, but usually when I'm trying to set up somewhere new that I'm not super familiar with, I don't really have connections, um, I tend to try to do that.

David Crabill: I thought it was a fantastic idea. And I also noticed that, um, on Facebook, you know, it was, what, three months ago or so that you posted and you said, " You know, I'm at like eight hundred and sixty-three followers and, you know, I wanna get to a thousand by the end of the year." And then, but you posted a picture of your family, and you posted your story.

Um, and you, you've posted your face a, a few times and shared a little bit about yourself, but this was just like a family this-is-who-I-am post. And it was like, what, three days later?

Halei Musil: Three days. Yeah, three days. I really expected a few to just trickle in. Um, I [00:56:00] thought, "Well, surely it'll be before the end of the year," but, you know, you never know. Sometimes I have older customers that don't really do a lot of the social media thing, so I'm sure there's more customers out there than on my friend's page.

But, um, yeah, it was three days. I was incredibly surprised and so incredibly grateful at the same time .

David Crabill: I mean, have you learned something from that? Like, has it changed your social media strategy?

Halei Musil: I, I definitely just think personal connection is where it's at. People want to know who they're talking to, who they're buying from Um, and I like that too. That's, again, the community and that social interaction is just a huge part of what I want to accomplish personally, um, even outside of business. But this is just a great way to do that, to get involved and to meet people, and again, there's so many stories I've heard, um, of people using my products in different ways.

Or like I said, with the sand plums, there's a lot of nostalgia that comes with that, and I really enjoy hearing that in this area. Um, I once had somebody tell me that they had a customer that

would come in and buy just blackberry jelly, and that customer had actually reached out to me to place a bulk order.

And I thought, "What could she possibly be doing with all this jelly?" And come to find out, she was actually a caretaker for an elderly bed-bound woman, and they just could not get her to eat anything else. And when she tried the jelly, that's all she would accept, and so they just bought it to have on hand.

And I thought, "Oh my gosh," like, this is so much more than just a jar of jelly, you know? You're, touching people's hearts and lives with this. And they do the same with me, so.

David Crabill: That's a very cool story. Are there any other stories that, you know, have, have been particularly meaningful, um, as you built the business?

Halei Musil: Yeah, that... I mean, that's mainly it. There's been so many in passing where people just, you know, they're always excited about sand plum. I talk about it all the time because it's really just, like, what people are wanting up here. Um, and so it, it never gets old seeing someone come up and, "Hey, hey, she's got sand plum jelly."

Like, it never gets old because it just makes people happy, and that makes me [00:58:00] happy. Um, so just hearing those types of stories, just little stories in passing. Um, again, I mentioned, like, the blue ribbons back here. Winning that for the sand plum was just the best point of this career so far because it's something that's local.

It's something that I poured my heart into. It came from my family's land that's been in the, the family for generations. It just means so much more to me than just a blue ribbon. I mean, that was really just, like, I've made it. I've accomplished what I needed to accomplish. And so, that's the most meaningful thing for me personally, but I love hearing those stories from customers too.

David Crabill: It sounds like you-- uh, like this has been such a meaningful business to you, and you're in a really good place with it. You love where it's at. Um, so what's next for you?

Halei Musil: What's next? Uh, just to continue growing and challenging myself. Um, I want to continue learning ways to market, um, continue learning ways to use my products to help other people use them, uh, to find ways to give back to the community. I mentioned I recently joined our local chamber of commerce, and so just getting involved to see, like, what are the community's needs and how can my business contribute to the success of our community.

Um, that's a big thing to me. As far as flavors, I want to keep experimenting, keep adding new flavors. I know I've got something fun coming up for 4th of July. Um, that's kind of under the wraps, but, um, as we celebrate America's big birthday, there will be something fun on the shelves in a few months. So I'm trying to plan ahead what fruits will be coming available to me in the summertime. What I can be doing to have flavor of the month at certain stores.

Um, so just continuing my creative processes, continue learning about business and marketing and, um, profitability. Those are all my goals.

David Crabill: Over the past few years, have you ever felt like you wanted to quit the business?

Halei Musil: Oh, yeah. I have unfortunately. I think we all go through those phases when, when life is life-ing and, you know, not so much that I've wanted to quit right now, but, um, [01:00:00] you know, it's the end of the year. We have all the school activities, all the field trips. We have baseball and T-ball. We have two schools and two schedules, and I'm just running crazy till all hours of the day and night.

Um, it's not so much that I wanna quit, but it's just, like, I cannot find enough hours in the day to make this feel like I'm being successful in all of those areas. And there are some times you have to do that juggling match where it's like family has to come first today, my business can come first tomorrow, and the kids can just be occupied.

I've got to get back in the kitchen. Sometimes the kids go with me. When I pick up my little from preschool, she'll go with me to restock the stores, and so she kind of has nicknames for every store that we go to and- Um, she likes to go look around, and so I try to incorporate my family as much as possible to make that balance happen.

It's not always possible, but, um, but yeah, there have been times, like the month that my jars were broken and didn't seal, I just thought, "Is this even worth going through the hassle and the amount of money?" I was out hundreds of dollars that month just in jars, and it was depressing. It was kinda like, "Okay, is this really profitable enough to continue?"

But you just have to go back to your why. Why am I doing this? What are the pros? And make sure that your pros are outweighing your cons and, and for me, they do. So even when I wanna quit, I'm not going to.

David Crabill: And, and what is your why? What's keeping you going in those hard times?

Halei Musil: My family, um, my community, just the flexibility. I- I've worked the real job, and I know how little flexibility there really can be when you're working for somebody else. Um, and I just try to keep that in the back of my mind, like all the positives of being able to pick up my kids, to not have to worry about bad weather days or if a kid is sick.

Um, those are my whys. It's, it really is the best of the best. It's, it's what I had hoped for deep down when I was working full time. Um, you know, I would think about some of our small business owners in my town that were moms, and I thought, "Man, that would be so nice to not get up and drive to the city and, um, you know, just to be there for your kids and to go to their sporting events and to still have something for yourself." [01:02:00]

And so even though it was never really like, "I'm gonna go open a jelly business," um, you know, deep down I always wondered what that would be like to just have the best of both worlds, and

now I do. And so there's no reason to stop. Um, I have everything that I need doing this, and I'm just gonna keep on trucking.

David Crabill: Awesome. Well, thank you so much, Halei, for coming on. Now, if someone would like to learn more about you, where can they find you or how can they reach out?

Halei Musil: Sure. Um, so the easiest way will be through my Facebook page, which is called [Halei's Homemade Jams and Jellies](#). I post daily. I post some behind the scenes. Um, messaging me through Messenger is the quickest way. I'm usually pretty responsive to get back to you. So if you're curious about a flavor or there's something you wanna know about, feel free to send me a message, and I'll get back with you.

David Crabill: Awesome. Well, thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today.

Halei Musil: Thank you. I'm glad to have, that you had me.

David Crabill: That wraps up another episode of the Forrager podcast. For more information about this episode, go to forrager.com/podcast/168. And if you enjoyed this podcast episode, I have a favor to ask you. Could you take a quick moment right now and leave me either a review on Apple Podcasts, a rating on Spotify, or if you're watching this on YouTube, could you like the video and/or comment on the video?

Anything that you could do to interact with the podcast will help other people like you find it as well. And finally, if you have been thinking about selling your own homemade food, check out my 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. Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.