

Why People Pay \$33 for Something They Could Make at Home

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 Jackie Struble. But first, if you're feeling stuck or wanting to grow your cottage food business, you should check out my membership, [Cottage Food Pro](#).

One of the main benefits of Cottage Food Pro is our monthly group calls, which are a great opportunity to get personalized feedback directly from me and other members. In addition to our monthly calls, [Cottage Food Pro](#) also contains tutorials that are designed to boost your business without breaking the bank.

To learn more about my membership, go to cottagefoodpro.com.

All right, so I have Jackie on the show today. She lives in Nolensville, Tennessee and sells fire cider with her cottage food business, 11th Hour Fire Cider. Jackie lost her mother to cancer when she was in her 20s, and since then she has been focused on preserving her and her family's health.

That led her to discover fire cider, which became a staple in her household during the pandemic. In 2023, she started selling her fire cider to others, and after only three months, she was already selling wholesale in a local store. Today her products are carried in shops across seven different towns in middle Tennessee.

But what really stands out about Jackie is how openly her faith drives her business. It shaped everything from why she started to her deliberate choice to stay small rather than chase growth just for growth's sake. So today, I'm looking forward to hearing how Jackie's built a successful business while staying true to her values.

So with that, welcome to the show, Jackie. Nice to have you here.

[00:01:43] **Jackie Struble:** Thank you. Thank you so much for even providing the opportunity to do this.

[00:01:48] **David Crabill:** Well, Jackie, take me back. How did this whole journey get started for you?

[00:01:53] **Jackie Struble:** My business started, not with the intention of starting a business. It was during COVID in 2020. No one knew basically what was going on with our, our, our wellness at that time, and people were reaching for everything, including myself. Holistics came out of the woodwork every which way.

I tried a few, a few holistic stuff, and finally fell onto fire cider because it was just such a heavy hitter.

it was very easy to make.

There were hundreds of recipes out there, so you didn't have to have one certain ingredient,

Um, things you can get at your food market. So I made that. And, um, we had-- my family had picked up, moved to Tennessee, where cottage food law, I feel like in my eyes or I was paying attention, was, was more happening around.

And I thought about I you know, I have some time, I could make this into a business.

Um, and then I just thought like why would someone buy this when it's actually really easy to make? And then I reminded myself that I too was once a really busy person.

and I have to remind myself that often that not everyone has the free time to do everything in the world.

So we all can't do everything as much as we want to.

So I started the business, reached out to, um, the Tennessee Ag, and I sent my product out there.

I am very much a rule follower. So I sent my product out, had it tested through them at UT, and they gave me the the hard rules of fire cider, because it is an acid-based product, so I need to be at a certain pH level.

And, they told me basically, as long as you're staying in your home and you're not moving to commercial level, which would require a different... a, a few different steps, I guess, uh, to change over to, like, commercial kitchens, um, business licenses, specifics like that. And I just rolled with the at home because it-- I started seeing how many benefits it had with just being at home, being able to do my, my duties at home at the same time, raising my kids, and everything just started forming and taking shape at that point with my business.

I love being creative anyways, so that was always fun to learn about. And i'm pretty sure most of tennessee, but definitely Middle Tennessee, there are markets everywhere here. Everywhere. So, so there's so many opportunities to start a small business anywhere.

[00:04:45] **David Crabill:** Yeah, you know, you mentioned in there that, like, you felt like anyone could do this, right? It's pretty easy to make. But of course, that's something that a lot of people get hung up on, right? Which is that, you know, they think, "Oh, you know, why would somebody pay me to do it when they could do it themselves?"

But of course, people are, are busy. So what actually got you, uh, over that maybe mindset hurdle, or I know you were using this for your family for a few years before you actually decided to make it a business in, um, summer of 2023. So what was it that caused you to actually decide, "All right, I'm gonna try to sell this and, and make it into a business"?

[00:05:24] **Jackie Struble:** Uh, I think talking about it. just friends, people I came in contact with, I would talk about it, and then either someone drops a comment that, you know, "You should sell that," or, "You should bottle that. You should make that." at the time, I was working, uh, part-time. Like, I had a, I call it a, a busy job, um, at an orchard in my town, and the owner there was just gently becoming a mentor by default.

And she really was the, the base of saying like, you know, "This is what you would need to do," because she was showing me all the, the products that come into her, her store, and I just, jumped forward and I was just like, once you make, like, one sale to someone, whether your, your product has the most basic label you can think of, meaning like handwritten on a, on a white label or something, once you make, like, that first sale, you know, a lot of it becomes, before marketing even jumps into the picture, that kinda just-- It's, it's by my favorite, which is referral word-of-mouth.

That's like one of my favorite things, 'cause that's like your, your testimony right there that your product is a good product. so So jumping over and I, I, I don't like to do things more like simple. Like I'm not, I don't put, I, I never have I ever put a basic label on my bottle. I went straight for straight where people were like, you know, they thought my product was commercial.

I'm like, "No, that's me." You know, I created... I sat there and created my label and everything. I did the research on what had to go on it and, um, just making sure I was following the rules of cottage food law. And, um, so I just kind of jumped right in with that, and it might not have been the best, uh, financial part, you know, 'cause you weren't making money to justify the, the purchasing of your materials and stuff.

But I always, always think that you should just really put your best, your best foot forward on what you're doing. If it fails, it fails. You know, I'll-- That's why I always call everything like kind of soft goals. You know, I'm not, I'm not gonna be upset if the business fails or something, but I also know myself well, whereas I don't like to fail.

So, and also noticed that there wasn't a lot of people doing this around. That was something that I, I'm sure people in the, the baked area feel that pressure all the time is that everyone's baking. Not everyone's making fire cider. it's probably half liked by the community. Everyone loves, um, elderberry 'cause it's sweet and palatable.

But, the holistic girls, the ones that are doing all tinctures, were really the only ones. and with that, I, I definitely learned to create boundaries for myself.

Like I knew that, what I wanted to do, I wanted to keep things real simple. I just don't, I don't enjoy stress. I don't think anyone does. so I didn't want my business to become stressful by doing multiple products, whereas I was just like, um, I call myself like a one-trick pony. That's all I do is one, one product, fire cider.

Although I have different flavors through the seasons and stuff, um, but I, I try to keep things really simple. But once you, once you get it out there, someone's gonna buy your product. It's no doubt. And then from there you have to figure out why is it selling, why is it not selling? And there's, I mean, there's so many reasons that come with that that you have to do the homework with and pay attention.

[00:08:41] **David Crabill:** Yeah, I mean, that's actually, uh, an important point because, I mean, maybe it's much more popular out there than it is here, or maybe I'm just not in the right circles. But I never heard of it before, you know. It's not a, a super common product, right? The very first post on your Instagram is a pinned post of like, "What is Fire Cider?"

Explain it to people. And I mean, that can be a good thing, like you're saying, you know, you don't have competition, right? Or a lot of competition. But it also can be a not good thing in that, you know, there aren't as many people necessarily looking for it, or you have to educate people. So what have you learned about that?

Has that been a struggle?

[00:09:19] **Jackie Struble:** So, I had to shift, you know, somewhat of a drive I had to like i- in the beginning you have this like, like, "Oh my, this is gonna be successful." I mean, you wanna be positive, but I really had to shift to education, and that's where, that's where things really started to change.

I, I put myself in markets, and that's where like... I mean, I love markets. I don't do them a lot, um, but I love them because I- that's the only time you actually get a chance to really talk to the customers out there. And, um, you really get to know stories. And when they say something, then they're not just looking at a bottle and then putting it back on a shelf.

I could actually tell them something. Or if they tell me something that's, you know, why they, why they think they don't need it or why they think they do need it. I mean, I think everyone needs it, but that's just my opinion 'cause I'm the owner of the business. Um, but I also don't, don't push it. So, um, that, that is an important thing to pay attention to.

But getting out there in order to like, your feedback, what I think and what everyone else thinks is, is so different. So the feedback that I get, it's, it's being able to, especially in the beginning, is being able to change a little bit with your business. Like, don't be so like, "Nope, this is my product and this is how it's gonna stay."

Um, that, that to me is not, that's not, that, that kinda divides the connecting between you and your customer. So, I think the, like, that, that connection of people is really what determines, um, where you're going with your product. ' and you'll get that feedback right away, and then you have to decide whether you're going to take that information and move your business around it, um, depending on, I guess, what your goals are and your, your speed of your goal, too.

So

[00:11:04] **David Crabill:** Well, I completely agree that you have to be very flexible and open and listening to customers, getting that feedback. And then with a product like yours, I mean, I would consider that to be a riskier business. It has potential, but, you know, it also has a risk of just not working well or you can't charge the price you need to charge to make it worth it. Um, so you talked about being flexible. I mean, what if it hadn't worked well? Do you feel like you would've shifted away from it, or do you think you would've just decided, "No, I'm not gonna... to run this business if I can't sell this one thing"?

[00:11:40] **Jackie Struble:** No, I wouldn't. I, I feel like this is... I mean, maybe because, um, my business does decently well at my pace. Um, I definitely would not have shifted to something else. I mean, I could make brea- I've done all those homemaking things. I can make cookie... I make amazing sourdough pancakes, and sometimes I think, I'm like, "Man, should I just do this?"

I could just start in the neighborhood and just..." But it- I just don't think that's, I don't think that's personally what I was called to do. I think, um, I love, uh, gardening as a

base of my life. I love the land, I love plants, and I, I think I've always loved that since my 20s, and I think honestly, God just circled back around and gave me something.

and I still think, I believe that He gives me this, this opportunity to grow as a test for me. But, um, even where I sit right now, like I could be, I would be 100% comfortable maintaining just where I am in the stores I'm in. that's why I'm very intentional where I go. I don't just go into a store just to go.

I do recon before I go in. I see what their... There's plenty of markets that I won't do because I've gone behind the scenes to see, what people, what their, I guess We'll call them their, their morals are, I guess, uh, their guidelines for themselves for their business, and I've just politely declined.

Um, no need to explain why, I just don't agree and I don't feel aligned with them. So I feel very aligned where I am, but if it, if it did fail and I wasn't selling, I probably would've just continued selling to just friends, people that I knew, enough that it was... it's always not so much producing, uh, a certain percentage, uh, of income or anything, but that it's, it's paying for what you're making for the most part, and your time.

That's, that's the one thing you always take a hit on is your time. So I, I don't, I don't think I ever would've stopped. Um, I think everyone's in such a rush to reach what they consider a, a successful thing. But, uh, the fact that I'm sitting in this, I think is a success because it does what I need.

It, it connects me with people and stories, and I love that, especially, you know, our elders. Like I love hearing stories. that's something that's always been close to my heart. So I feel like I am successful now, and the businesses that hold my product for me, um, they know that I'm super grateful for them for that.

And that's only-- that's seven. And I set those standards too. Like I won't go into more than one place in a town. Like I set that myself as a boundary just as a sense of loyalty. So, um, but I do not think I would... I don't think I'd stray. I wouldn't, I wouldn't try to create another business. I would probably just, you know, chop out things to friends.

That's what I would do. I'd-- That's how much I love it. It's like a, it's a very... I love it so much, and I'm, I'm blessed to have that actually.

[00:14:37] **David Crabill:** This brings up something that I noticed in looking through your, uh, social feed is that, you know, there's this concern of yours in terms of growing too big, which, you know, a lot of times cottage food entrepreneurs are more concerned about, you know, growing enough or growing bigger that, you know, they, they wanna, they wanna get bigger.

Maybe they wanna take over the entire nation. But there's definitely a, a, a, a standard, like you said, or you're, you're concerned about hitting a certain point where you're too big. Talk more about that

[00:15:10] **Jackie Struble:** When you have this, this thing to grow or if someone presents it to you to grow your business, like a lot of things come into a vendor's mind. Um, where are you sourcing your ingredients from? You... There is an advantage, obviously, to sourcing more ingredients because you're gonna get a lesser of a price, for sure.

but you might also have to change where it's coming from. It may not be always accessible. So, and when you have something, let's just say with the oranges, I had chose to put organic on my label, so I'm locked into that. I'm not gonna throw in, you know, non-organic oranges. So you just overcome That now I know, so I, I load up prior to that.

There's like one month in the year in the fall time that is, you, you can't find an orange anywhere. Um, but now I dehydrate oranges as a backup just in case. Like, I don't like to be in that uncomfortable situation. So that whole thing of growing big really changes everything for you. Yes, will I be able to sell outside the state lines of Tennessee?

Yes. But now I have to worry about shipping. Um, that's another job because as those of us that are small cottage food owners, we are usually like one-man teams. Like, we are by ourselves. Like, everyone's like, "You know, support our business." I'm like, "Ah, it's me." Like, I'm the one that's reading your emails. I respond to you.

Um, I'm, I don't have a, a generated thing. Um, AI's been helpful with marketing some things, um, to cut your time down in half. But, um, that's where you have to find your, your balance of where do you wanna be. And there are some people that are 100% looking forward to it and, and cut out for that pace of life.

Um, but also you invite, you know, you invite more problems. Like, it's, it's like anything else. Once something grows a little bit big, um, you know, you start to lose. I do personally, I will stand by this one, I will believe that you, you will start to lose the quality of your product. It's just the nature of the beast going commercial.

Um, no one's there to watch. Like, I hand pour... Um, I think I had a girl one time ask me, she owns a business, and she had said, "Oh, I know someone that could bottle for you." I was just like... And I just, I looked at her and she just looked so, like, nerve-wracked, like stressful. And I'm sitting there, I'm like, "No."

I'm like, I sit there over every batch. I pray over every batch as I pour it, asking, you know, just healing for everyone emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually, you know, whatever it could do for people. And even I pray for the people that buy it for others. That's how much I, I reach out for it. Um, so

I like the smallness of it. I like, I love growth, I do, but it has to be intentional. I am definitely not that business that is just looking to be on Shark Tank and, you know, be sold out in 10 years for who knows how many million dollars. That's not my... That, I think that for me personally, I lose, I lose my whole, my whole process.

What it means to me to have this, to steward this business in the first place. I don't think that's what I was meant to do. I think I was meant to connect with people, educate them on just basic wellness, especially when it's so overwhelming in our world

[00:18:26] **David Crabill:** Yeah. Well, I mean, this ties directly into something that, you know, came up over and over again, which is just that this business is much more than just selling a product to you. You know, I, you can tell it in everything you're saying that it means a lot to you, and y- you're trying to do good and, and do good for your community and your greater community. So, you know, why do you feel like you do run this business at the scale that you do? 'Cause seven stores is... I mean, in some eyes that'd be a pretty, pretty substantial business. But, you know, like what, what's, what's pushed you to actually move into seven different towns, you know, as opposed to just keeping it a little bit smaller?

I mean, even that is significant growth and shows that, you know, you've wanted to get the business to a certain degree of scale

[00:19:20] **Jackie Struble:** Um,

There's a small grocery that, I go into seasonally, um, up in north of Nashville, and the sweetest family in the world, very I- she said, "We have very loyal customers."

and she did because she sells a fire cider that she purchases, you know, where she would make more money off of, and then she, they, they put mine. And you could put them right next to each other and mine will sell, sell out before his every time, and his is a corporate one. I like to stay small, but like to grow slowly. I mean, there's only so many towns in Tennessee that I can get into. Um, not to say that I would never go into commercial kitchen, but I would have very-- my commercial kitchen would not be what someone, uh, would see. I've been in rental kitchens to see what they were like and, you know, generally my house is 1,000 times cleaner than a rental kitchen.

Um, so I can control the atmosphere. I can control the vibe in there, um, and I love that so much about it. But, um, growing big, uh, seven stores, I don't know if that sound, it doesn't sound, it, I don't think it's a lie, but my seven stores are very loyal, um, for that fact around our area too. We have a, we live in Williamson County, which is a really busy It's, it's a, a very increasingly growing area.

so I don't foresee my business declining by just staying at seven stores. And, um, I just take-- And that's the one advantage of having a home business is that, you know, this year I'm homeschooling again for a second year, so I really wanna be present and that, that is... These are those golden nuggets and advantages to, um, being able to really control your business.

If I had gone commercial or if I'm in 24 stores at this point in my life, I may be a little stressed 'cause you have to fulfill what's going on. Like when an order comes in, you're fulfilling and, um, you know, I think about like cookies are probably really easy to make, but like bread takes space. You know, cookies you could stack and everything.

Uh, fire cider takes space. They're, they're large glass jars, and they have to be a- I think about this all the time, they have to be agitated every day, um, 'cause as stuff floats to the top and you leave it there for two weeks or whatever time you, you neglect it, um, you can grow mold in there. So that's part of any business with food.

Um, so where I'm at with mine, I can manage it. I know, you know, I enjoy my summer. I have a good time. I still sell to my stores. I check in, but my fall time is, is wild. It's, it's just a busy time for fire cider out here. So, um, so I'm good where I'm at, but, uh, I do look forward to growing more like one store at a time.

But I can tell you that store has to be aligned with me, otherwise it's a hard no. Hard no

[00:22:12] **David Crabill:** You said something interesting there that, you know, you sell in a store where your product is sitting next to another fire cider that's commercially produced and yours sells every time. Why do you think that is?

[00:22:23] **Jackie Struble:** Um I think ultimately when it comes down, if you have a, a commercial product on and then you have a local product, people are generally, if price wasn't a matter They would choose a local every single time.

I think that is something that pulls for them. It's, it's part of their heart and they want to support local as best as they can. Um, but convenience rides the day when it comes to it. So with, uh, when the price now comes into fact, you know, let's just say my bottle was \$20 and this guy's was 10 and they're both the same, most likely they're either gonna choose the \$10 bottle first, and if they hate it, they'll go up to the 20.

Um, so it's, it's... It comes down to different people, but I think that whole of focusing on local is what helps my business, um, do well for the most part is, is, you know, we're in the South, so supporting local is important. Everyone saw that in during COVID years when the businesses, you know, you were doing what you could to help keep a restaurant in business by ordering takeout for dinner and stuff.

So, um, that local stuff is really important 'cause when things close down or something happens, you know, everyone knows where they can find it here in town. They could be like porch pickup, so

[00:23:37] **David Crabill:** Yeah, th- there's a few different factors here, right? There is the fact that it's local, and it sounds like in your area a lot of people really prefer that, at least the people in the certain stores that you're in. And then there's also price. That's obviously gonna be a big factor.

And the product itself, right, which you mentioned, is, you know, like what's actually in it and what do people prefer. And then there's the packaging. You've got glass bottles. You have, like, professional labels. I mean, it, it truly looks not like a home business. It does not look like a one-person operation.

So how much do you think that the packaging has been a factor of your success? Because obviously it does stand out on a shelf

[00:24:22] **Jackie Struble:** that marketing is important with, um, with labels, keeping it simple. But, um, I think in the beginning, I remember my first year, someone sending me a message asking me, like, "How do I use this?" And I was so nervous then to tell them because when you do wellness products, you know, everyone makes you so nervous about, like, giving medical advice.

Um, but it's not medical advice. I can't tell you how-- I could tell you when you're sick and no one wants to scroll down and seeing, "Well, what did she say about how to use this?"

I want you to know what it is and how I use it and what it can be used for, like in portion wise. So I think that's making things as easy as possible for people, keeping things, um, simple when it comes to marketing. People have a very short attention span. Um, unless they usually... The only thing I'll see to draw them in is if they have a story behind it that they wanna connect, then they're, they're, they're all in the whole story of everything with everything.

But you don't have that opportunity when your product is sitting on a shelf in a store. I don't expect an owner of a store to walk everyone up to my specific product. Um, but I

am grateful for the store owners that when they hear someone cough in the store, they're like, "We have fire cider in the back."

Um, so those things I like, but when you're not present selling your product, it's, um, it's definitely more, I see there's more challenges with that. So you have to make sure that your, your labeling is not just your basic, and how can you kind of set yourself apart from everyone else, and that may come down to wording, that could come down to color, that could come down to whatever objects or shapes you put on there.

It could be the name. So there's, there's a lot of things that go into that, and that's, that's where you have to learn in the beginning of like... And also at the same time, I guess like, you know, not letting go of you. Like, my colors are orange and, and blue. Like, that's not your typical color for like someone who's a homemaker on something.

Mine's like bam, right in your face. Um, but I love it. I love blue and, you know, orange just became a part of it.

[00:26:26] **David Crabill:** Well, let's walk through, you know, how this business kind of became successful. So you started it in the summer of 2023. It was obviously a big part of your own life, your family's life.

Um, how did it start? Were you just selling to friends and family? Were you advertising online? What were the first few months like?

[00:26:49] **Jackie Struble:** um,

For me, I remember when I-- the first store I went into was the apple orchard, and even though I knew the owner, it's still nerve-wracking 'cause it's your product. And I remember telling her Like trying to connect it with her saying, "Well, you're at an apple farm and this is apple-based.

This is, this is gonna be great." And she's like, "Okay." But she was the one that taught me about, um, pricing and, and wholesaling, and she's like, "I want you to go home and think about this and marinate, and I want you to come back and tell me, you know, uh, what you want to offer." And I'm really grateful for that 'cause I know not everyone has that opportunity.

Um, and then she connected me with another girl who had a business in Elderberry, and she gave me great tips. She's like, "Oh, Jackie, you need bigger bottles." I was like, "No, I'm good. Five ounces is, is good for me." She goes, "No, it's not." She goes, "People are gonna want to buy bigger bottles." And lo and behold, three months later, people wanted bigger bottles.

So, um, getting it into that first store wasn't-- It was nerve-wracking, but there was a still a sense of security for me because I knew the owner. Going into your second one, you know, just cold was, uh, was really... I remember I was heading out to, um, I was heading out to... Well, actually, my second store would've been, uh, Mooberry Farms.

So they, he was, he was looking to open a store, so he approached me, "Would you sell your product?" And that's when we, uh, learned about, um Consignment versus wholesale. And, you know, 'cause you had to throw yourself into that world. Like, some people don't wanna consign their product. They don't wanna... You know, I personally like consigning.

It's, it's very, um, it's very routine. And, uh, but wholesale, you know, once that product is off your hands, it then becomes their responsibility. So there's, there's pros and cons. I do both, and I actually give the option to the owners of the store 'cause it makes no difference to me. Um, but going into, I think it was my third business, and I didn't know them, and they had this beautiful, sweet store out in a, a nice area in Leiper's Fork, uh- Mm

near Franklin, Tennessee. And, um, I remember just praying on the way and, uh, just saying, "Lord," just like, "If this is the door that's meant to be open, let it be." And, um, the husband was so good at making me... Like, taking me off the edge and just, he really... And he asked me one question which I wasn't expecting.

He said, "What's your story?" And I was like, "What?" And, uh, it just wasn't prepared to give him. And he didn't just want the story. He wanted to know my story. And all those, all these steps along the way were just like, man. And, you know, they are probably one of my busiest stores to this day. Um, and, uh, like, they're the o- They asked if they could ship their product to Cal- ship the product.

I was like, "No, you can't ship it to California." I was like, "It's gotta stay in the store here. Um, we're rule followers on this one." But, um, but yeah. So I think it's, it's you... I mean, I think every small business owner has to step forward, as uncomfortable and scary as it is, but you have to do it. If you don't, I mean, you just have to be prepared to fail.

And I don't mean, like, gra- like, this grand scale of failure. You just have to be able to, you know, take the hit of whether they didn't want you in the business. And if they haven't told you why, maybe ask them. I'm just starting out. If you're just... You get a lot more just being honey instead of being mean to people.

So if you just ask them, "Is there something I could have done different?" Like, a lot of them will tell me. Not a lot of them, but the bigger stores will say, like, "We need you in

a, a commercial kitchen. When you do that, circle back around to us." Um, and that's where I spent the last year marinating and it's just, I don't think that's for me at this point.

But stepping out, like, what gets you to that point is, is just, you're just taking that whatever... I know not everyone is, is Christ-centered, so I know that's a struggle for everyone. Um, but for me, it isn't, so I just, I put my foot forward. If the Lord wants me to be in this place, then it's meant to be. And I also know that it might not be for what I think it's for.

It's for what He believes it to be for. Like, who knows what it's gonna do? Maybe it's just bringing people back to the community. Maybe it's helping the store, um, stay afloat sometimes, which I know is really hard these days. Um, so that's why we're, we're big on small community, so.

[00:31:11] **David Crabill:** you started in I think July of 2023 and then you jumped into your first store in October of 2023. So just a few months in. And I know you knew the owners of that store, um, or, or f- uh, farm or whatever it may be.

But, um, you know, so it's kind of a nice way to ease into it. But, um, did you do market before that or were you just selling, doing porch pickups and doing like small individual orders?

Like what was it like leading up into that wholesale opportunity?

[00:31:46] **Jackie Struble:** Um, I always-- I had set some ground rules from the beginning. Um,

Our social medias are real flooded, and algorithms are probably the death of every small business. Um, so if you're not pumping out stuff all the time, you get lost in it all.

People don't see your pages or your posts. Um, so I needed to make sure that I made mine super accessible to my residents, and mine was, I will deliver to your porch. Um, in the beginning it was really any time. So I mean, I've delivered Fire Cider at ten o'clock at night to someone's porch in town. Or you could porch pickup.

Um, obviously someone's gonna choose the porch drop-off. That's a lot easier. And, um, so that is something I put out there in the very beginning using our local pages. So, um

[00:32:35] **David Crabill:** I gather that you're doing delivery for free then?

[00:32:38] **Jackie Struble:** Yep. Yeah, yeah. I do. I just drop it off. Um, So there's so many things you could do to see, um, what you need to do in order to, um, get yourself out there locally.

Um, markets are tough because in the beginning a really good market is really expensive. Um, so you could be at a market that, you know, a two, a two-day market is a lot for me. I, I... That's not my cup of tea. but getting into markets, I mean, I think you could sell a bag of anything during Christmastime to people. So if you're afraid and, like, you're so nervous, just wait till Christmastime to sell then because everyone's throwing money at you at Christmastime for gifts and everything.

So if you're so nervous that you think your product's not gonna sell and you make paperweights or something, I don't know, do it during... Find a holiday one. Um, but just getting out there and learning, and that's... You have to be... You have to give your... Or, you know, receive some grace on that because you'll learn, um, where you don't wanna be.

Or everyone always asks me, "Why don't you do your Saturday farmers market?" I'm like, "'Cause I don't wanna give up my Saturday. That's why." Like, I don't want... I wanna spend Saturday with my family, so I'm not willing to lose that value over selling on a Saturday. I would rather hustle out to find another store to make up for what I could there.

Like, that's just not... And that you have to find your, your values of what, of what you... What, what keeps your peace, if that's something on your plate, which is a very big part of my plate. Um, you know, but just, uh, putting yourself out there is important. No one's gonna, you know, know who you are by absorption through the, through the internet.

If so, you're, you know, it's probably not the best product. People wanna see you. They wanna meet you. They wanna talk to you. They wanna connect with the owners all the time. So I think markets are exciting and, um, to get in as many as you can in the beginning, so in all different areas, so you learn, um, you know, where you are.

It's just a lot of work. Markets are a lot of work. I... You know, we all know that that do it. It is, it is a hustle. It is carrying everything in, carrying everything out, eating when you can. Um, if you bring kids with you, you're spending money there that you're making. So, um, I put my kids to work, though, when they're there with me.

They, they sell with me. Um, but yeah. So just... get out there to a market. That is your eye-opener for being, being okay with some change and seeing how you're affecting things, how your table looks.

There's a whole gamut with that, like what, what people are attracted to, why they're walking 20 feet from your table that you have to be like, "Hey, come on over." Um, so there's, you know... Have a dog. Everyone loves dogs at a table. Bring your dog to the

table. Um, they'll come over and pet the dog. But there's all different ways, so each alley isn't just cut and dry.

Everything has like these, I would say like multiple variables on, on one alley, so

[00:35:29] **David Crabill:** Did you feel like you had a pretty decent footing when you stepped into putting your product on a store shelf? I mean, that may have come through a market or that may have come through just direct sales to people that you knew. But did you feel like the wholesale was the beginning of your business or did you feel like you were actually, you know, making a substantial amount of sales before that?

[00:35:53] **Jackie Struble:** No, I feel like I jumped in to everything like right at... I was, I was like this, this way. So I went this way, this way, this way. It was just a matter of doing... I wasn't just like doing one thing. I didn't sit there and think like, "Oh, I'm only gonna wholesale." That's not what I wanted to do. Um, I truly enjoyed markets.

Um, I knew that was a way to connect with people. And again, that was really the only way I could really explain my product, um, and keep someone's attention. You're less likely to walk away from a person than you are like scrolling on an Instagram feed or something, or worst case, you know, in, in a, in a store because no one's sitting there pulling you to the product.

You have to really hope that they see your product or are looking for it. Like there's, there's one store in the area that everyone's like, "You would be perfect in here." And I, I politely tell them every time, I go, "It's, it's not... It, it, you would think so, but their shelves are so jam-packed that you'd have to know, um, what you're looking for and that's, that's, that's hard for me.

And on top of it, the place is so busy that, um, there's no way a chance that the owner's gonna say, 'Oh, it's over there on the shelf.' Not gonna happen." So, um,

I don't sell too much out of my home anymore. Um, I try to push it to the stores. Again, that's my heart that leads me on that with just getting people into the store. Um, I clearly make the most money off of me directly. That's, that's any business for sure, 'cause there's no markup or anything.

But, um, I like to keep like all options on the table.

[00:37:32] **David Crabill:** I did want to ask you about your pricing. I, I know that's something that you really had to decide on when you went into that first wholesale business.

And, um, it's not the easiest product to price out, right? It's obviously very labor-intensive. I know you steep the stuff for weeks or months. I don't even I don't even know.

It's, it's a long time. So there's all these different considerations in price, and as you said, there's not maybe a lot of options or competition out there, so you didn't have as many, uh, price compare- comparison points to, to work from. So how did you determine what you were gonna sell it at at that first store?

[00:38:17] **Jackie Struble:** So when setting the price, um, I knew not to set it low, and I kind of factored in It's really weird because I was trying to factor in, which I knew wasn't gonna... I wasn't fluffing things up, but I knew, like, if I'm buying bulk at this point, buying, like, a whole thing and I'm making, let's say, 15 big jars, I was sitting there dividing, okay, this is how much it costs to make the liquid part.

Divi- I was like, you know, receipts. I was doing all this stuff and figuring out pricing, and then I had to factor in, um, I needed insurance right away. So I factored in my insurance. My biggest things I was taking, I knew in time, I knew I would grow, I just didn't know when. So I knew that I would find some, some space, some air, some relief in time with my bottles and labels.

I wasn't willing to just throw on some craft sticker that says, "Homemade by Jackie." I just wa- that, I had to make a choice at that point. And I, I still, I sell through me cheaper. So my, and mind you, if you back it up, you can go on Etsy and, um, probably Amazon if you think about it.

If you go on, Etsy would probably be the easiest, um, on seeing other-- Now you'll see fire ciders, like, everywhere. And, um, those prices are gonna be ranging around mine, but also, like, you know, you could be out in Wymo- Wyoming. So the price, things are gonna be different, different, everyone has different access to bottle sizes.

So I did mine, um, per ounce and then factored in my bottles. Um, my tiny bottle is literally not a money maker, and I tell the, the stores that too on them. Um, you're not making money off these. Um, may- maybe, I don't even know, maybe a dollar they're making. Um, but it's an entrance into the doorway for them.

So it's a such a two ounce, it's a small travel size that you're gonna have that person that is not willing to commit to a big bottle 'cause they're like, "What is this stuff?" Um, so it's more of, like, just an entrance to fire cider. Someone that's curious and wants to try it. So, um, which most of them order that one for that reason.

And then you have your mainstay, which is your five ounce, um That pricing, uh, for me, I put between 15 and \$17, and I let... The, the stores are always gonna... They know their business. They know what they, what they charge at what time of the year for that. So it pretty much stays around there. Um, and then the bigger bottles, those are my expensive bottles.

Like, those are... That'll take me a long time to get a, a cheap bottle. Um, and I love the way it looks. Like, so I don't want your, your typical bottle. The, the five-ounce bottle is your typical, um, hot sauce bottle. And everyone's like, "Is that hot sauce?" I'm like, "It's not hot sauce. It's fire cider." Um, so but I love that 'cause it draws people that love hot sauce to my table that don't even know what fire cider is.

And I'll-- Once I get you to the table, I've got you in to talk. Um, but my, my 12-ounce bottle, which I did have a 16-ounce bottle at one point, um, and I just pulled it back 'cause that bottle, that glass bottle was so expensive. I moved it down to a 12-ounce bottle. Um, and I, I don't have a choice in that. I have to take that for what it is now because, um, people want more than the five-ounce bottle.

They want a shareable bottle with their family. Um, and it, it... And honestly, it looks nicer. It looks... It's a really pretty bottle. Um, so with the pricing-wise, um, the owners of the stores obviously have full right to charge whatever they want. They always ask what's the going rate, and I've seen them, you know, they're like, "Okay, duly noted," but they charge what they want.

Um, and that is gonna be, that is on them through wholesale. Um, they're not gonna sell something that's not gonna sell. So they know how to adjust their price points and stuff. But setting your price is, is you really have to sit there and think not to undervalue yourself. Um, I think my, the first mentor I had, she had said, she goes, "You're not gonna pay yourself the first year off this.

Like, don't think about it. Like, just do, educate, do your business, and everything will come forward." I was like, "Okay." Um, so the time it takes to put into everything, um You know, especially at home and you sit there and you're trying to factor in like when you're doing your taxes, your lighting and, you know, dishwashing and your oven, 'cause I gotta sanitize everything and all those.

Um, I try not to get tripped up so much. I feel confident in my price where it's at for a local price. Um, I could never see charging more than I already do. Um, I think I'm, I'm where I need to be. And you also like, I would often go into, um, Whole Foods or Sprouts, and I would look at their wellness shots, and I used to take those years ago.

And those things are like five bucks for one shot that you drink right then and there and never see it again. So when you look at other products like that, um, that are to help aid your, your process of maybe getting better or your gut health, um, that's, that's, that's a good judgment. If you don't have anyone to compare to, then look at other things that are somewhat sil- similar.

They're making-- they're commercialized, so they're making more than I am. But to stay in that point to say more-- people will pay more for something super locally made than commercialized. So what if your, your drink, my, my fire cider was, I don't even know how much the other guy was in that one store, I never looked.

But if you're \$2 more, people are gonna pay the \$2 more for something locally made. Um, so not undervaluing yourself is really important. But remember the, the general public doesn't-- they forget that you have to pay for labels and insurance and, you know, Canva. Um, like all those things are a part of your business, um, you know, to, to just help it, help it thrive in a way.

So you have to account for some of those things in your price.

[00:44:21] **David Crabill:** So where have you landed with your prices? What does a 2 ounce and 5 ounce and 12 ounce cost when you're selling it directly to a customer?

[00:44:31] **Jackie Struble:** So directly, um, directly my two ounce is \$6, my five ounce is 15 directly to me, and my 12 ounce is \$33. Uh, those are the three sizes I offer. It doesn't matter which, um, variety, whether you're my basic batch, my original batch, which I love, and when people ask like, "Well, which one's better?" I will say just buy the original batch for the mere fact that it's got more ingredients in it.

Generally, my original batch has the most ingredients. So yes, it is sometimes not the easiest to source, um, organic cherries or, you know, whatever I choose in that batch. Um, I can assure you my mushrooms aren't cheap. Um, but I, I just, I circle back.

So some things, like as an example, I may make more money on the bigger bottle, whereas my two ounce makes, um, not a lot of money on that at all. So it's not equal across the board with my products, like of what they're making. But I feel as this one, the two ounce bottle loses a little, I gain it on the bigger end.

And, and now, I mean, I'm what? Three years in and I sell more big bottles like, just like that second mentor had told me. She's like, "You're gonna sell them." I'm like, "No." And even though my five ounce is my go-to, um, in your, in your, in your house, just 'cause it's easy, people just want convenience, and that 12 ounce bottle rides the day with everyone.

So if I keep selling more of those, that's, that's the greatest thing for me. And it, it enables me to keep the, the businesses that aren't making a lot of money on that one to still maintain that. They know that, so I show them the breakdown of, uh, percentages and stuff of sales.

[00:46:10] **David Crabill:** mentioned having mentors in your business. You've had multiple mentors in your business, and you've had one, it sounds like, from the beginning. What have, uh, what, what has that been like for you to have the mentorship? You know, what, what would you recommend to other people?

[00:46:29] **Jackie Struble:** Mentors are a good thing. They, they help guide you. Um, I'm not gonna say every mentor's gonna be great. There's gonna be pushy ones, and that's for you to discern whether, like, "Eh, this isn't good for me." I'm just-- I love critically thinking. I tell people this all the time. I'd rather know as much as I can and then take what I need that applies to me and my path.

So, um, you know, going straight into a commercial kitchen is something that may not stress someone else out or, you know, maybe they're, they don't have a family quite built yet that they don't have to be home cooking dinners every day or, or doing that. So, everyone's path is different. And like I said from the beginning of our interview, I think there is so much-- there's enough love for everyone to go around with this.

There is enough success in business, and some might be really good at it, and some may, you know, not be really good at it. But if you just do what you're doing because you love it and you do it well, I feel like you're, you're good. You're-- It's just you then just might have to reevaluate your idea of success

[00:47:31] **David Crabill:** Well, thank you so much, Jackie. Now, if somebody would like to learn more about you, where could they find you or how can they reach out?

[00:47:39] **Jackie Struble:** So no website yet. Maybe one day I'll release that, but, um, just reaching out on [Instagram](#) and, and [Facebook](#) are the easiest ways to get in touch with me.

Just not selling outside of the Tennessee borders, but I guarantee if you just search it in their areas, there's someone there locally that sells fire cider locally, and I would say support them, support, support any local maker because they, they truly put like their, their blood, sweat, and tears into, into their business.

[00:48:07] **David Crabill:** Awesome. Well, thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing with us today

[00:48:12] **Jackie Struble:** Thank you.

[00:48:13] **David Crabill:** That wraps up another episode of The Forrager Podcast. For more information about this episode, go to forrager.com/podcast/178.

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