

## Featured Guest Interviews

### Jeremey Tolley (@redthreadfarm, redthreadfarm.com)

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[00:00:00] **Jeremey Tolley:** Hi, my name is Jeremey Tolley. I'm the owner and farmer at a red thread farm in Franklin, Tennessee. And we grow a variety of mixed vegetables on a small, micro farm. And we also are starting to aggregate products for our online store. And we've been selling online almost exclusively for three years.

[00:00:20] **Diego Footer:** When you were starting out the farm, you were also working at the time, so the farm was a side hustle thing. Was going online one of the strategies to make that work-life balance work for you?

[00:00:34] **Jeremey Tolley:** Yeah, absolutely. So we actually—I started selling online because my wife told me that I needed to stop bringing things and stuffing our refrigerator full because I was—I love to grow, and I was growing more stuff than our family could eat.

[00:00:48] So this is a familiar story. That ballooned into starting to grow for other people, which then resulted in me, figuring out an avenue to do that. Friends and family wanted to buy, and I just thought it'd be cool to have a website. I actually heard on your podcast, Diego, I think Mark's market garden. Remember that?

[00:01:07] **Diego Footer:** Yeah, yep.

[00:01:08] **Jeremey Tolley:** That was my inspiration, so following his lead I set up a website with an online store, I started selling. And that's how we got started doing it, and then in February of 2021, I actually left my corporate job and started doing this full-time.

[00:01:24] **Diego Footer:** When you look at the early days of setting up online for your farm, how are you attracting customers? I think that's a struggle people have. You go to a farmer's market, the farmer's market brings the customers. You, you go online, you have to bring the customers to you. How'd you guys do that?

[00:01:40] **Jeremey Tolley:** Right. So no paid advertisement at all. It really started as word of mouth. So, you know, neighbors, literally the people on our street started buying from us.

[00:01:50] They would then post, Hey, this is so cool. You should check this out. And then just really, I think social media was probably the biggest avenue that got us our customers, Diego. We did a post on—we have something called Next Door here, I'm not sure how national that platform is, but you know, Hey, I'm Jeremey and we're the Tolley family and we're selling vegetables down the road from you.

[00:02:12] And, you know, we just... Even though it was very small, very micro when we started out and really just more of a hobby, it's always sounded and looked professional. So I think people have always kind of felt like we were bigger than we were because of our website and because of the language that we used in the post, and we never misrepresented ourselves,

but it was fairly polished for probably went against the grain of what people would think of as a small farm or a backyard garden, really..

[00:02:40] So Next Door, and then we started a social media presence, mostly on Instagram, but also with Facebook as well. People just started seeing us there and just beautiful photography I think it gets forwarded and, you know, using tags and those kinds of things.

[00:02:55] I'm certainly no expert at it, but I think that's probably proof that if I can do it, anybody can do it. And just word of mouth, really. We have—some of the customers that are buying from us now that we're larger, three years later, much more professional, are the same customers that started with us from that very first Next Door post.

[00:03:14] And I will add that we offered free delivery before really delivery was a thing three years ago. It was before Amazon and all the other things happened, we were offering free delivery for our neighbors in a pretty limited radius, delivering to them on Sunday. And that really helped as well.

[00:03:34] **Diego Footer:** With that word-of-mouth clientele-based building, did you ever get to a point where either you felt like, okay, this is growing, but it's not growing fast enough, or did you have the opposite from ever where it just grew, and you're like, okay, we're we have more customers than we can produce food for at this point, we got to kind of cut it off?

[00:03:56] **Jeremy Tolley:** It's really the latter. So, we've never really advertised or done anything because that, that word of mouth has provided us this nice trickle of clients. We also have a very good client retention rate. Our customer retention rate is pretty tremendous. I should've calculated it for this call, and I just, I didn't get around to doing that, Diego.

[00:04:14] I can go back and do that for you sometime in the future. But you know, we have people who buy religiously every week. And those folks, like I said, have been buying from us for three years. So as we've gradually ramped up our production, and particularly as we ramped up production this year, when I started doing this full time, I've just tried to be really measured about that.

[00:04:34] So we have put more promotion on our current channels with Instagram and Facebook, we've started doing more regular emails to our customer base. We've asked our customer base for referrals, and I think that has helped. And we've not provided any incentives or anything like that. We just said, Hey, I really, really appreciate you.

[00:04:56] You know, we hope that you appreciate the value that we're bringing to the community. We're at the point where we should add more customers now. We've got more tomatoes and produce this year than we've had before. So we share the word, and I think they have because when those emails have gone out and when those requests have gone out, I immediately see an uptick in people hitting our website, people hitting our newsletter subscribe form and our social feeds as well.

[00:05:20] This has happened not because, you know, we've done great posts and that kind of thing and catches stuff. I think it's because we've developed relationships with these folks for years.

[00:05:31] **Diego Footer:** And if you strip out the outliers in terms of geographic location relative to your farm, how tight would you say the circle is for the majority of your customers?

[00:05:43] **Jeremy Tolley:** About a 30-mile radius.

[00:05:44] **Diego Footer:** Okay. So pretty, so pretty close to home.

[00:05:47] **Jeremy Tolley:** Yeah, it's really close to home.

[00:05:49] **Diego Footer:** When you look at the customers that you're retaining, so they have local, right? Cause you're not that far away. Why do you think they stay sticky? You know, we all use a variety of services, and some are happy to refer people to, and some are not. The ones, the customers that you have in one, if they're sticky, they probably like you, and they probably refer people to, what do you think you've tried to do different?

[00:06:16] **Jeremy Tolley:** So I think there's really two key things that we've done differently. One is—maybe three. So one is we're in a county that is very high cost of living. It's the highest cost of living county in the state of Tennessee. There just, unfortunately, there aren't a lot of small farms here because land costs is so high.

[00:06:38] I have the fortune of having some land here and the ability to do that. Whereas someone normally farming wouldn't be able to. So my competition in the county is actually fairly low. So we're able to say, Hey, get your groceries in your back door at your back door. And we're really the only option for that outside of going to the farmer's market or traveling outside the county to get vegetables.

[00:07:00] So that's one thing, but then I think the quality of our produce has always been exceptional. So we—when you're selling exclusively online, I don't think that you can afford the luxury of sneaking in things that are seconds or that have bad spots or that aren't first quality or super fresh because people, when you go to the farmer's market, you want to dig through the tomatoes and pick out the ones that you want.

[00:07:24] So our commitment to our customers is we will not sell you anything that we wouldn't hand pick out at the farmer's market ourselves. And if it's anything less than that, you'll know about it, you'll have the opportunity to get it at a lower price of all good or something like that, so that they're getting really a premium product.

[00:07:40] And then we package it in a way that makes it really attractive. Our produce is packaged, and it's really pretty simple. It's a brown paper grocery bag. We fold the top down. It has a stamp on the front of it and we tie a string on it, a thread on it. So when you pick up a package with us, it looks like you're receiving a gift.

[00:07:59] So that, those things are really important. The quality, the appearance I kind of, we could at our house, it's the Nordstrom of vegetables because you know, the way that we present it, the way that we presented when we deliver at someone's door, it just, it looks like they're receiving a gift.

[00:08:16] And the third thing, and probably the most important thing, is relationships. So I know them. I take, I go to great effort to make sure that I remember their names. When a car pulls up for delivery, you know, for pickup, then I know it's them. We have their bag waiting for them without having to ask what's your name again?

[00:08:35] We don't always get that right, but we really try. I know things about them. I try to remember things that they say, so really cultivating this client loyalty through developing

relationships with people is really important. Now, as we scale, our ability to do that will be dependent on my memory, but also people who've ended up working for us and having the right staff in place.

[00:08:55] But you know, they know that we know them, they know that we know what they like. You know, if you bought from me, Diego, and we were out of cherry tomatoes, it's very likely that I would save you a box of cherry tomatoes and say, Hey, sorry, we didn't have these for you last week when we were out.

[00:09:07] I snuck some in your bag, on us. That's the kind of stuff. And people are just delighted with that level of service and relations.

[00:09:21] **Diego Footer:** Yeah. I think that Nordstrom analogy is interesting because if you think about that store, I mean, when you walk in, it's just, it's nicely laid out. Everything looks nice. There's people constantly re-tidying up.

[00:09:32] If you compare that to a Macy's, as you go in, you're gonna have very different looks, just aesthetically. And then the salespeople there, you know, more trying to help. And if you get something, you know, it's nicely bagged and a nice bag. And the overall experience is higher compared to other stores.

[00:09:51] And I think... I think that often goes by the wayside sometimes in farming, and you get this price-experience mismatch, where we want to sell more than the grocery store, but does our experience match the price that we want to charge and what our customer base might expect if they are paying this?

[00:10:12] And I think you've put a lot of thought into that. And I imagine it goes a long way to retaining customers and kind of wowing new customers.

[00:10:22] **Jeremy Tolley:** It absolutely does. Also product knowledge, which I know many farmers have, if not all farmers, who, you know, understanding what to do with the product.

[00:10:29] So for example, this year, we grew—I decided to really scale back on summer squash and because it has this peak where everybody wants zucchini, and then nobody wants zucchini. So we grew patty pants because I knew I would have a dual market for that with restaurants selling baby patty pans and then having these small scale squash for retail customers.

[00:10:50] Well, to my surprise, no one knew what a patty pan squash was. So we started tucking those in their bags and really explain to people, Hey, I put these in your bag. Trust me, this is the best summer squash you've ever had. You'll start buying those once you have them. Here's how to prepare them.

[00:11:08] Super simple. You know, here's what to do. And so just educating customers on the actual product, taking the time to do that, which I have a bit of a luxury in the—it's not a farmer's market with a line, I have the opportunity to speak to people. The kids can be pulling the bags for people who are coming to pick up on Saturdays.

[00:11:26] And then, you know, I have the opportunity to speak to them, but let me tell you about this tomato. Let me tell you about this variety and why this variety was important culturally in the state of Tennessee because this person's from New York. So that's the kind of,

I just, it goes back to relationships and people feel like I'm not just someone trying to sell them something that I really care about it, because I do.

[00:11:46] **Diego Footer:** Totally. And I was just listening to a video, and it was talking about three things you can buy that actually make you happy. It was going like, buy happiness. And one of them was an experience. And if you think about average retail purchases, a lot of times we're buying stuff.

[00:12:07] And that wasn't one of the things that makes you happy, but the experience of maybe going and buying is sometimes what people are buying when they're buying stuff. I get to go out, I get to spend money. I get to have a nice experience.

[00:12:20] And with farms, I think more than other retailers, you have that opportunity to really dial up that experience, have the conversations if people want, have them come out to the farm, visualize it, see it, look around, and it's a different type of connection than, you know, a cardboard box shows up on your doorstep, and you got that thing that you needed.

[00:12:39] And I think that is one thing that really does build that customer base. Do you try and encourage customers to pick up on farm or do you push delivery more or is it just you're okay either way?

[00:12:53] **Jeremy Tolley:** Really okay either way. We actually—we charge a delivery fee. We didn't used to do that, but now we charge \$5 for that.

[00:13:00] So that, as others have said on your podcast and the recent work that you've done, that sort of kind of modulates the price of that, you know, the order price that happens with delivery. And sometimes, people will choose to do pickup if they have a small order. And we have a limited delivery radius.

[00:13:18] But it's about one third delivery and about two thirds pickup people like to come here because I think they like to interact with us. They also like to see where their food is grown. They're getting an on-farm experience because our pickup area is surrounded by gardens and the high tunnel is there, and they could walk in and see tomatoes growing to the ceiling, that sort of thing.

[00:13:39] So it's, yeah. And I can have to be careful with not encouraging farm visits too much because we sort of become a free agritourism for people. But yeah, I think they like the on-farm experience and actually being able to see this food that's being grown.

[00:13:58] **Diego Footer:** In talking to a lot of people over the years and being at conferences and doing conferences and workshops, there's always been a group of farmers that are like, you know, I'm not really a people person. Like I don't like to interact.

[00:14:21] I think people think, well, if I go online, I could potentially hide a little bit behind that if I'm introverted. And I think you could, in a way, and make it work, but in today's day and age, hearing your story and hearing the stories of others, I'm not sure you can be that I-don't-like-people person farmer and be successful even going online because in businesses like yours, where people can order, they come pick up at the farm, you're going to have to have those interactions.

[00:14:53] And it's those interactions that keep people coming back. Like, how do you feel about being extroverted, being warm as a necessary trait of being a farmer today?

[00:14:59] **Jeremy Tolley:** Yeah, it's an interesting question. I'm a classic introvert. I do not go out of my way to seek out social situations, but I've developed a skill. Now, some of that comes from, I have a corporate background as a human resources, for goodness' sakes.

[00:15:23] So, you know, I have the ability to interact with people and, it's not it... Being in a social situation, although I do sort of enjoy it, it drains my energy. If I were an extroverted, it would build my energy. So, you know, it's not something that I seek out, and I want to do, but I can tell you, I would not have been able to develop an online business selling produce without forcing that extroversion and interacting with people maybe as much or more so than at a farmer's market.

[00:15:44] Now, the advantage I have is I don't get the people walking by saying, you know, how much is this and why is that so expensive? And, you know, tell me, are you organic? All they're finding that stuff out of line, but the actual customer interaction, I think, becomes more critical because they're not seeing me except at pickup.

[00:16:02] They're not having long interactions with us. They're trusting or going online and trusting and purchasing something online. And then they want to see us, and they want to interact with us. And those people, if it were just the vegetables in the bag, even though the vegetables are beautiful.

[00:16:17] And even though it's super local and it's, you know, in a pretty package, I don't think that people would continue to come back, and we'd retain those customers if I were not going out of my way to develop a relationship.

[00:16:37] ...showed up in their car, so I don't—if you're looking for a way to avoid social interaction, I don't think an online business really shields you from that. It actually, maybe, it makes it even more important.

[00:16:45] **Diego Footer:** Yeah, I think, you end up, you're gonna have to get somebody who does like it, if you're that adamant about not doing it to at least be that face of it and being the face of it. How important do you think it is that you're the touch point? Do you think you think you're an interchangeable piece or do you think people associate Red Thread with Jeremy?

[00:17:10] **Jeremy Tolley:** So they do associate it with my family because they see my kids out there. And part of our, you know, if you look at the way that we position our business is it's a family business, we're the ones growing it.

[00:17:20] It's my fingernails that are dirty, that sort of thing. But no, I think we could succeed with—if we have the right people, when we have the right people working for us, when we get to that scale and we start having more people who are customer facing, I really believe that that can be replicated.

[00:17:37] Those people just need to be passionate. You know, things that we've talked about before, they need to be passionate about the product. They need to be dedicated. They need to have that customer you know, the caring customer interface, and they need to be willing to develop relationships just like I am, but I don't think it's limited.

[00:17:54] **Diego Footer:** Sure. And one of the things that you've done as your role here is, you know, you've done a good job at welcoming new customers in, like in an email, you're saying you go out of your way to identify first-time customers, you know, give them a call. Can you talk a little bit about that and how you think, why did you even start doing that, I guess?

[00:18:15] **Jeremy Tolley:** Yeah. So I started doing it because I realized people didn't understand our pickup system at first. So we had a card outside, this was when we were super small. We had a card outside where it was self-pickup. You can pick up any time during the day. You just needed to, you know, online, you could schedule an appointment when you ordered and come within a one hour window.

[00:18:37] I couldn't be out there to meet everyone. So I was finding that I had new people coming. They were picking up their package in a car, never seeing us. And so, I started calling people to say, Hey, I haven't seen your name before. It looks like this is your first-time order. Do you have a few minutes? I can introduce myself.

[00:18:53] And then I would just say, you know, Hey, I'm the farmer, I'm the owner. I really value you coming. How'd you hear about us? We just have a conversation, and let me tell you how to pick up. Here's how that works. This number that I'm calling you from is my personal cell phone, so feel free to text me or call me if you have any questions or need help on your day of pickup.

[00:19:13] And so I realized that people were really... Those people seem to come back because they had some sort of relationship. And so I just made that a habit of every time I have a new customer, even though things are really well on our website, and they've received plenty of email and texts communications, all of that's really very adequate, that phone call, when they arrive for pickup, then they see me.

[00:19:34] They sort of already feel like they know me. So it's not a cold first interaction. It's a, oh yeah. We talked on the phone. And, you know, sometimes depending on if my memory is sufficient, I'll remember. Oh yeah. I remember you said you were gonna use those tomatillos to make a salsa the other night. Did you get jalapenos with that?

[00:19:52] Cause if not, I'd like to throw a couple in your bag for you, and they just—their eyes light up because they can't believe that I remembered them. I think part of that is because they think our business is bigger than it is because of our online presence, and it looks and feels kind of slick.

[00:20:05] I think they feel like, you know, that I'm serving thousands of customers here. And but I just think, it's any of us. It will, it gets our attention when someone remembers something about us in this world where we all sort of feel, in most retail and shopping situations, we feel like just a number you know, we're just the next person in line. People are hungry for relationships.

[00:20:29] **Diego Footer:** Yeah, I agree. And I think you're right. I think most... I think most customers think most small businesses are bigger than they are. And if you kind of just, kind of did one of those blind reveals all, here's what you think that our business looks like. Here's what our business actually is. It'd be a lot smaller, in most cases.

[00:20:53] And we can use that to our advantage, not in a disingenuous way, but do use it to say, Hey, you know, like we can stand out. Do you think we're a big and we're busy? Well, we

are, in our own way. But we are going out of our way to make that connection. And it is something lacking in business today.

[00:21:02] And I think about, finding contractors, how tough that could be. I have an electrician that I normally use now, his name's Max, and I'm at the point now where it's like, if I need something done, I really don't even ask how much is it going to cost. It's just like, I need this done. Can you come do it?

[00:21:17] And I just trust he's going to charge me what he thinks that, you know, the appropriate rate is, and I'm okay. Where a lot of times with contractors, you know, there's, I don't know, where's this guy getting this number from?

[00:21:42] When you look at your business and this trust level you built out, you mentioned one thing you're looking to do is grow the business by aggregating products from other, local producers. How important do you think it has been to cultivate this trust factor?

[00:21:56] So, you do get kombucha or bread from some other company that your customers can say, okay, well, Red Thread didn't produce this, but they have their stamp on it. I'm going to give it a shot.

[00:21:56] **Jeremy Tolley:** Yeah, that's the bet I'm making. And so far it, I think it's working that when we put something on our side and say, our family likes this, we know this producer, we're going to be very selective in curating the selection of products on our farm store that are things that we think that you would like, we're finding that our customers trust us, and they're willing to buy that and purchase that really without any question, because they they've established a relationship with us.

[00:22:26] They know us, they know the quality that we have and what we expect of ourselves. So I think it's really helping. So we do have a micro bakery that we're working with that's producing bread for us. We have a chef that we're working with that's doing some pastries and some dips and dressings and stuff like that in a commercial kitchen that she's doing for us.

[00:22:48] Just small, we're just kind of testing the waters on that. We're getting ready to work with a mushroom grower to add mushrooms to our site, and eventually the idea is that we will be an online, you know, really high quality, local store that people can go online and buy everything from vege to dairy, to meat, to you know, other local dry goods.

[00:23:12] And so I think the way to do that is to, with this customer base, is to be very careful about what we select and continue to be open about that. So we are actually calling and serving our customers to say, Hey, we introduced this new loaf of bread. Why do you think, honest feedback? How do you really feel about that?

[00:23:33] Just to make sure that people really do, with that core customer that is pretty narrow for us. It's that the type of customer that is buying from us is I think we're starting to understand it's very certain people who want to do this every week and like the products that we have to make sure that we are really finding great quality, but then, you know, having them to trust us because if we don't get that right, and we just put stuff on there to make money, just throw stuff on our side to see what sticks, they're not going to trust us.



[00:24:08] **Diego Footer:** Have you found that certain core of the customer base that is willing to really kind of go above and beyond when it comes to talking about new products, like ones that just really are excited about trying stuff, giving feedback?

[00:24:25] Cause I like the direction here of, Hey, we can just put whatever on our site. We like it, and we don't, we think you'll like it, but we don't know that you'll like it. And there's a difference between just putting something up and saying, well, it didn't sell, we don't know why. And putting something up and then asking tons of questions to customers, you know, do you like this?

[00:24:46] Is this price seem right? Or do you like the sizing? How does it work for you? What have you found in relation to getting feedback and do you have that core customer base that really seems to be like, okay, they can be our beta testers?

[00:25:02] **Jeremy Tolley:** Yeah, we do. So we have, you know, in any group of people, you'll find that there are folks who are really vocal and will tell you what they really think. So, you know, when certain customers come up, we'll say, Hey, I know you tried the bread last week. What'd you think?

[00:25:25] And you know, it was too hard. The crust was...it was too tough. Didn't really like it. Made great toast, but it wasn't good for a sandwich. Okay, yeah. Great, great feedback. So we asked several people that way, that we know that are solid customers.

[00:25:33] I think they really appreciate that. So, I've even said before, you know, gosh, I'm sorry you didn't like it. This has been a pretty small number of people who haven't liked something, but I'm sorry you didn't like it, or didn't meet your tastes. Do you want to sit, make that right for you? Oh no, no, no.

[00:25:49] That was no problem. It's not, you know, it's just...we probably just won't buy it again. Great. Good to know. So yeah, I think that's been really helpful, but that's back to the relationship that I think people want to...they want us to be just more than the vendor that they shot from, they want to have a relationship with someone, with a family, with a business.

[00:26:13] We always say we'd love to be your farm. And that's what I think we've become to a lot of people, we are there for them. They feel some sense of ownership of what we're doing, to the extent that they're willing to refer people. They're willing to post online. They're willing to say, you know, Hey, I saw some kind of bad review on your site.

[00:26:30] I'm going to go put a five-star review on there because that's just not right. You know, that relationship piece is—I keep emphasizing that, but it's just so key to not having to work on customer retention all the time. We have people who come in that every week, they have a hundred dollars' order that comes through, and that's a pretty big ticket for produce

[00:26:52] **Diego Footer:** For sure. And you think about, you know, a hundred dollar order. I mean, that's not a hundred dollars' worth of carrots or a hundred dollars' worth of tomatoes in a lot of cases, probably a lot of different stuff in there.

[00:27:07] And this is where I think businesses and farm businesses can kind of transcend from just, we're providing a service where there's an exchange of goods to like the curator, you know, you're their curator of the vegetable and local experience because, you know, it sounds like you've built enough of a relationship.

[00:27:29] Okay. You can try here, patty pants, try them. You know, we'll put them in there, and you're leading them into this path of trying new things, and then you get feedback. Oh, you don't like it? That, you know, we're gonna introduce this new product.

[00:27:38] And I think that gives you so much more optionality if you're curating an experience for them versus just selling because they're—I think they're more invested. You can try new stuff. You can aggregate, like you said, and it sounds like it's worked out really well for you guys.

[00:27:58] **Jeremy Tolley:** Yeah, it has. And we could, I felt like we could grow this so much bigger so quickly, but I really am trying to make sure we're really working on building infrastructure.

[00:28:08] We have a second high tunnel that we've got to get crops in for the winter, fall and winter season. We've been building a lot of new beds this summer and just working on—we just did a wash pack. So I've just really been trying to modulate the customers that we get. If you go to our site right now, you can see that we're sold out of a lot of stuff.

[00:28:30] People get disappointed when they come, our store's open Monday through Wednesday. If they come on a Tuesday night, and we're already sold out of tomatoes and you know, some of the hot crops, then, you know, they're going to be disappointed and not want to come back. So I really want to make sure that we get our production up to where it needs to be before we...

[00:28:48] Attract more customers. Does that chicken egg issue of the way to see if you can grow at first or do you get the customers first and then grow it for them? So we're always trying to balance it out.

[00:29:01] **Diego Footer:** How big part you see aggregation in the future? I mean, you said you think it can grow into something big. There's two routes you could go. You could just produce more tomatoes, like you said, on your land or acquire more land, or you can go aggregate, other bread or other dips. How do you view the two options?

[00:29:23] **Jeremy Tolley:** Yeah, I'd love to see aggregation as 50% of our sales eventually. In fact, we have a—even though we have eight and a half acres, right now, we're only growing on a quarter of an acre here.

[00:29:34] So there's only so far I can take that. Even if I max out our quick crops and rotations and round-the-year growing, even if I max that out, there's only a certain amount of revenue we can get from a quarter of an acre. So, I'd love to see us to refine that and get really, really good with that.

[00:29:51] At the same time, continue to add on, selectively and carefully, products that we really believe in that we can aggregate for our customer base so that we're really at 50 50 mix.

[00:30:02] **Diego Footer:** I guess the great thing about doing it online, too, or even at a farmer's market, if you're allowed to, is you can just put it up there. Right? There's very little resistance to going from an item that we didn't sell yesterday to selling it today. Posted online?

[00:30:20] **Jeremy Tolley:** That's right. I just talked to someone who's—We're going to work with for mushrooms. And I said, Hey, the advantages, I'm not going to ask you for a whole bunch of mushrooms to come and sit that we might not sell. I'm going to tell you exactly how many pounds we need.

[00:30:33] And you know, you'll Wednesday night, you'll get the order. You'll know exactly how many there are, and I need them by Saturday morning, 10 o'clock. So, same thing with our prepared foods, as well. So, if we have a dip or bread that sells really well, I give them a halftime report and say, Hey, we've got you know, we're—it's selling really well, you might need to behind more flour or whatever the case might be. And then they bake or cook or prepare to order based on how many see.

[00:31:02] **Diego Footer:** With the aggregation, how do you view that in terms of the business side? Again, I think there's maybe two ways. It's like, Hey, there's just an additional revenue stream where we're making money, and then some people say, well, okay, we need to cover costs.

[00:31:12] We want to make a little bit of money, but we also want to just be more of a one-stop shop, provide some more diversity to customers to try and help retain them so we can sell more of what we focus on, which is vegetables, which is where we really make our money. How do you think about aggregation?

[00:31:32] **Jeremy Tolley:** I need to make a profit on it. I do. It's...I need to make sure that the person who's preparing or growing or providing that for us, that product or service that they're making a good living, then it's a good deal for them. But at the same time, it's not just an add on as a nice thing for our customers.

[00:31:49] I'm not going to put anything in that's solely on our site. I don't think that this is just a nice to have. You know, we're a small business, for every one of those products, we're paying the credit card fees on it. We're standing behind the product and guaranteeing it. It needs to be in... I need to have margin on that.

[00:32:11] In the future, let's say let's say we wanted to add dairy, we want to add milk from a local dairy. Something like that, if it was needed to round out a selection and maybe the profit margin was low or even non-existent, in the future, I might do that just to create, just to be able to say, we have everything from your vegetables to your meat and dairy and bread.

[00:32:34] But we're just—we're not at that point yet. So if I'm going to go to the hassle of promoting something and paying the credit card and doing all the stuff that it takes to get that product ultimately in the customer's hands and then do the follow-up on it, all the work that's done on that—there's a lot that goes into that. I need to make a decent margin on it.

[00:32:54] **Diego Footer:** Do you think about just selling this all online? I mean, there's some complexity with scaling, more on the fulfillment side of it as you scale, and bot really on the online logistics.

[00:33:09] But say you ever wanted to make it into a online farm store, in-person farm store, a lot more logistics there, a lot of changes. Do you think that'd be a direction you'd ever want to go where, you know, you'd have the online store, but they'd actually come pick it up at a farm store, and then you can just get walk-ins as well?

[00:33:27] **Jeremy Tolley:** I do, yeah. It's definitely part of the vision. So I think there's a pretty big segment of our population that they don't want to go to the farmer's market or they can't, or it's just, they forget to go, or whatever the case might be.

[00:33:46] So we can—recapturing that group of people who want to eat local, but they don't want to go to—and we have one of the best farmer's markets anywhere, but we're capturing that segment.

[00:33:53] But then as we expand, I think we're going to have a segment that people who really want to come and pick out their own tomatoes. So we actually have the center out of our barn is reserved for a future onsite farm store so that people can come pick up and then do add-ons. We sort of do that today.

[00:34:12] So sometimes, we'll have extras available. So perish—highly perishable stuff like tomatoes and okra, summer squash, those kinds of things right now. We'll actually put a board up on pickup day that says, here's the extras we have available. Now, we don't take it all out of the cooler and set it up and do a display currently.

[00:34:28] But as people stop by, if they want a pound the tomatoes, I'll grab that for them. And I'll grab them the pound of beans or whatever the case might be and put it in a bag for them and allow them to buy on site. So, I think, and people do that. They really like the option to say, Hey, the things that I really wanted, I want to make sure that I reserve them online.

[00:34:49] But now that I'm here, I think I'm going to make pickles. Do you have cucumbers and dill? Sure. I can sell you some of those in bulk, that sort of thing. So I do see, you know, I look out, I really admire Jenny I think is her name, Dogpatch Gardens in Ohio, I really admire the farm store that she has.

[00:35:09] Combining that with what Max is doing with Farmivore in California, that, to me, would be a perfect model for us to have here in Franklin.

[00:35:18] **Diego Footer:** Yeah. I love the direction you're going with all of this. For people that want to see your store, follow along with you, where are the best places to go?

[00:35:26] **Jeremy Tolley:** Yeah. We're on social at Red Thread Farm and online at RedThreadFarm.com just type in Red Thread Farm, and you can't miss us.

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