

Episode 101

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SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Robin Burton, Ethan DeLeon, Jamie Burton



Jason Duff 00:00

We know that coffee is a driver for economic development. We also know that small towns are a great place to have multiple coffee shops, and we're going to talk about the courage that it takes to go from a mobile truck to a brick and mortar store. Today, we're going to unpack all of these lessons with two of my favorite people in their space, on their couch, talking about crazy, wild coffee drinks. Let's get this started!



Ethan DeLeon 00:29

Unpack lessons from entrepreneurs, break down development strategies and dive deep into small town success. This is the small nation podcast.

J Jason Duff 00:39

Hey guys. This is Jason Duff, and welcome to the small nation Podcast. I'm the founder, and I'm excited today because we are back with episode 101, and we are on site today with Jamie and Robin Burton, the CO owners of always Bruin in downtown Bell fountain. They are one of the newest coffee shops to open up in a vibrant downtown that we're so proud of here in Bell fountain. And if you don't know, we've talked about the importance of local food, things like great pizza and craft beer and economic development, people travel for coffee, and I'm really excited today because we have folks that I'm going to unpack their journey and their story of how they got involved in serving food and then specifically coffee, but also how they took that big leap in courage of actually going from a mobile business to a brick and mortar. And there's so many people that I talk to and towns that have a great idea, but then there's that fear that can be paralyzing in taking the next next steps of actually opening the business. But on that note, let me just kind of share we are in the live coffee shop today at 200 West Columbus, which is kind of anchored on this corner in downtown Bell fountain. And we have both mom and daughter that are here. So welcome to the show guys. Hi, yeah, so I want to hear the origin story of how, first off family business, how you got started? But maybe a lot of people want to know, like, how did you learn about getting into food?

J Jamie Burton 02:27

Okay, so actually, my mom, she was a barista before I was okay, good job, mom, yeah, downtown she was for like, eight or nine years, right? And then I also managed to shop towards the lake area for seven years, and honestly, I started at Arby's. I didn't, I love Arby's. I didn't have a lot of experience at all. I was a manager there for like, seven years, and then I got the job there. Turned to be a manager there really quickly. I had no I literally just watched YouTube videos. You were self taught. Then 100% I didn't take classes, literally nothing. I just self taught.

J Jason Duff 03:07

And you know, for a lot of people, they think that you have to go through a formal education, and that can be for a lot of careers, whether it's pursuing a college degree, and some of those things are great for people. But what do you think like to become self taught for you? What was it curiosity that got you into it first?

J Jamie Burton 03:27

So I love coffee. My grandpa. I mean, every time we'd go over to their house, they would always, he always drinking coffee, hot coffee. He didn't do anything fancy, okay, so it was like Folgers drip coffee, right? Okay, so that like, but I've always loved it. And then when I started over there, I just was going to be part time still work at Arby's, just a couple days a week. And then I got thrown into a shift by myself rather quickly. And I was like, Okay, well, I'm gonna do this so, but the creativity part is really what got me like,

J Jason Duff 03:59

when you think back to your Arby's days. And there's a lot of entrepreneurs that I have interviewed that shared that they began their career working in fast food. What were some of the things that you think you took away from from that experience?

J Jamie Burton 04:12

So both of the managers, I don't know what they're called, but anyways, my bosses, I was assistant manager. They were my boss. They were amazing, and they taught me a lot about dedication. Like, I never call off even then, like, I barely ever, unless it's my kids, you have to show up. You always have to show up. We were, like, super high up in the company, corporately, so, like we did a lot of inspections that were tedious, and I learned that you have to do what you have to do to grow so well, particularly

J Jason Duff 04:49

for inspections and starting up a new business or maintaining a business, you have rules that you've got to, you know, pay attention to health and safety codes. There's equipment that. You have to buy and maintain and service, and I think those, for some other businesses, are the things that you need to know that you wish you would have known about. So by being able to work in a business that you could see those systems and processes, imagine that set a pretty good foundation for you,

J Jamie Burton 05:17

and working at the coffee shop that I managed I was I basically ran it for like, probably six years of the seven I was there, so I was in and out, ordering everything. I had all of that under my belt so and just taking it all in.

J Jason Duff 05:32

But still, for a lot of people that you know go through that journey to think about owning your own business, that's a big leap, yes. So what was kind of the steps that you took think about maybe I should start a business.

J Jamie Burton 05:49

So actually, my mom, okay, mom, she always wanted to

J Jason Duff 05:55

do something truck. Yeah, a coffee truck. So tell me about that, Robin, what, what was in your dream or vision about a coffee truck

R Robin Burton 06:03

being able to be mobile, meeting people different places? And I went over to my mom and dad's, and I was like, Dad, I really want to do this coffee truck. And he's like, Well, you know, I know you guys could do it, but it was never the right time. We never find found the right one we wanted. And so what like five years? Yeah, we finally found one on a very cold day in December of last year. We were three hours into Michigan and picked it up.

J Jason Duff 06:36

So was this like on eBay or Facebook? Marketplace? How did you end up finding it? Do you know marketplace? It was on marketplace. It sure was. And so a used coffee truck in another state away, and I imagine it wasn't cheap. You had to come up with capital to buy it, yep. How did you do that? Actually got a

J Jamie Burton 06:55

personal loan, yeah.

R

Robin Burton 06:58

We had saved back, yeah. And then we just put it all together and drove to Michigan, me, Jamie, the kids, my husband and my son, yeah, and we picked it up. And that

J

Jason Duff 07:09

story about capital, I do think for a lot of people, that's scary. It's like if there's not a money tree to really start out, so you have to find ways, whether it's a family member or a friend or in your case, you took a personal loan. I know folks we've shared and interviewed on the podcast have taken and used credit cards, but when you have that debt, was that a motivator to like we have to make this work 100% Yeah. So you got the truck, you drive up to Michigan, you pull it back to Bell fountain, Ohio, to your family home. What did it feel like? Flu.

R

Robin Burton 07:52

So sick. Yeah. But then my daughter in law, and we're taking pictures in front of it, and it was just like, that's crazy. It's here, but it's in the dead of winter, and we can't do anything

J

Jamie Burton 08:05

with it. Yeah, we stared at it for

R

Robin Burton 08:07

months until we could get we kept buying things for it, like cups and syrups and planning espresso machine and

J

Jason Duff 08:14

everything that we needed. So to test out some of your recipes and ideas, I imagine your kitchen, in your home, in your garage. Was it like your lab?

J

Jamie Burton 08:24

Yeah, it was set up in hers. I have a tiny house on their property, but definitely don't have the space in mind. So it was set

J Jason Duff 08:31

up in her kitchen. Yep. And at this time, you know, I have had the pleasure on the podcast to interview people that a lot of them had family businesses. I particularly appreciated I had the opportunity to interview both my mom and dad that were both small business owners in really unpacking some of the greatest joys that we had of all working together, having a shared experience and values and like that energy of hustling hard together. And there's not many families or people that are outside of family business that can truly understand it until you're in it. And for me, like with my mom, owning a hallmark shop growing up, most of our Christmases, Christmas seasons, from Thanksgiving to Christmas, is all we did was work together and and I'm not complaining about that. I actually really loved that, because it was our family time. And I imagine that when you think back to what you did to start this, it was incubating, working hard. Yes, there's fear with it, but it was something you were

R Robin Burton 09:33

doing together. So when I was younger, my dad and my grandpa owned the red cab service here, the SNS service, or the cab station, and then later they brought in the Greyhound busses that they owned. So from the time I was really little, we were in there with my grandma taking listening to her take orders for cabs, and my dad would be working on a car in the garage, and we were just running around in there. That was like, it was fair. Family time, but it was like we were they were all working together, my mom, my dad, my grandma, my grandpa, my aunt, my uncle, all my cousins.

J Jason Duff 10:06

And here in the coffee shop today, if you hear the noise happening in the background, it's actually a really sweet noise, because it's your grandchildren that are in here. Yep. And I think the beginning of thinking about starting a business, you know you and your family, you have grandkids involved. Tell me about that and your journey, you know, being a grandmother and then also being a mom and a single mom for that note of like, what, what was the fears around growing the business of how that could potentially take away from your kids?

J Jamie Burton 10:39

So for me, I we wanted to make sure that it was centered around the kids, to the point where we even have our employee, Haley. She has two, well, four, but two younger ones that aren't in school, and we wanted to make sure that they came first, so the family is always first with us. We had them back in the back room for a few months, actually, that was like their little daycare area, and so we had to get more space for cups and lids and all the things.

R

Robin Burton 11:11

So we're still trying to figure how to get them back in here. But right now, I have them at my house, and I'm only here just a little bit right now, but that's because we we don't have other people watch our kids, and then when they were here, we had a nanny, which is good, because we can come in and out. So being able to make sure that they're safe and happy, that's our if they're not, then our business is going to fail, like our family has to come first when

J

Jason Duff 11:43

I like what you're saying about always family and focusing on the kids, but then how that's led into the values of of your space. And for those listeners that are curious about your coffee shop, because I think in Bell fountain, Ohio, you guys may know the exact number, but there is maybe a total of 12, 1314, coffee shops here in town, if you really count the national chains and all the places. And when you get down to the independence, there's some really great I think there's four of them. But your space, when people talk about always Bruin, they describe it as being very different and not a normal coffee shop. How do you describe your business?

J

Jamie Burton 12:27

Well, we are obviously family oriented, so we have our little living room setup that we're in right now. We have a VHS player and a TV VHS for those.

J

Jason Duff 12:39

I'm an 80s kid, so I know what she's describing. A lot of your friends probably have never seen one of those at all.

J

Jamie Burton 12:46

Okay, okay, probably. But I we have kids come in, they pop a movie in, they sit down, they have read their books. We have kids books up here. We have a kitchen for kids to play in, coloring books, all kinds of crayons. Yeah. So that sets us apart, for sure, but we're also different, like our drinks are weird.

J

Jason Duff 13:07

Ethan, for some people, weird, when you say that, well, what does that mean, right? Weird is a good thing in your economy, right? Yes, we're

J Jamie Burton 13:15

over the top. So we do have the basics. We have drip brew, we have lattes, all the regulars, cortados, everything, but our main focus is the crazy drinks with all of the whipped cream and the toppings like we have right right now. We have a dusty bun that's really popular. It has a mini cinnamon roll and a three Musketeer bar on top.

J Jason Duff 13:34

And I am in a Stranger Things fan and four I know we were like messaging back and forth of like, what's gonna happen this season's night, and there's a lot of fun and anticipation. So Stranger Things is kind of this viral Netflix series that I think just ended a few weeks ago, but captivated a lot of people around the story and Dusty was one of the characters that you kind of named a drink after that's over the top, yes. And I think as someone that's one of your customers, and I love a lot of our coffee shops, but I'm drawn to your menu because you are literally changing it up and theming it frequently, yes. And so like for other coffee shop operators that might be listening, looking for inspiration or advice. What? What have you found your bent to achieve success

J Jamie Burton 14:27

with that? Honestly, you have to stay on top of change. People love change. They do. We were when I managed the other coffee shop, I would change it out with pop culture. I would do like, seasonal here, I'm changing it out every month, but they're like, limited time you come in January, after January is done, you can't get them anymore. And I've definitely seen people like, I posted about the February menu, and I had people like, no, why is this going away? And I'm like, you can get it next year, right? But you got these new drinks, and they're really excited. So it just builds anticipation. It builds urgency.

J Jason Duff 15:06

And I noticed that in your restaurant, you also have a digital display. I do, yeah, which having that digital display, you can change up your menu. I know it's rotating with rotating ads and pictures of what's there. I don't go into a lot of coffee shops and see a menu that's as energetic and evolving like yours is. Well, thanks. Yeah, no. And I'd also say the other thing here is the vibe. So if you were to, you know, and this is even the outside the building, like, I think, when you were talking about the goal to move from a truck, which we're going to talk about, that, to brick and mortar. You had some pretty specific criteria, of like, you wanted to be in historic downtown, you wanted a corner. And really, you had a timeline saying, I'm really not ready for a few years. And I think for me, just seeing what was so unique about your business and what you were doing, I was visiting your truck quite frequently, because part of it was like we had developed a kind of a friendship and relationship, and we had a space that had been vacant and empty for a long time, that had really the right infrastructure for a Coffee shop to be here. And I think it was like us just talking that started this idea that maybe if I was to move to a place, these were my criteria, anything else you want to kind of unpack or share about that.

J Jamie Burton 16:34

We actually went back and forth on it for a really long time. We were like, No, like we because we got the trailer in December, right, and then we opened at the beginning of May, and we were like, Okay, we're gonna do this for at least two years. We didn't have overhead. We were like, We're gonna save money, pay off the trailer, and then think about it. And then when you started coming, we were like, Okay, maybe. And like, we kept going back and forth

R Robin Burton 17:01

and then, but, oh, that's too scary.

J Jamie Burton 17:03

Yeah, you're like, No, we're not gonna do it. It's not we're not ready. And then around, like, the second time we came and actually seen it. And then we were like,

J Jason Duff 17:11

and I think that's when you reached out to Kane and said, who's our leasing and property manager? You said, I really think, just for our planning, like, you know, it's a vacant, available space, let's go through it and look at it. And I think at that time when he literally came back and said, they're moving forward. But for a lot of businesses that are sitting on the sidelines, that fear can be paralyzing. Oh, we were scared.

R

Robin Burton 17:33

Yeah, we were definitely scared to make the jump. But when we stood in here, there was a it was just like, we can do this. This is perfect. It's beautiful. It looks like a Hallmark movie. And that's what we wanted for, like holidays, for winter, for Valentine's, something that was just going to look beautiful.

J

Jason Duff 17:57

So the vibe I am looking in the space, and you have everything from vintage furniture, a fireplace that is welcoming, that has vintage Valentines on it, to plants to I see aliens, and then On the artwork on the walls, from dramatic quotes to rock stars to mirrors. It is a whole vibe in here. And it doesn't really look like, if I, you know, go to most small towns, it doesn't look like the other coffee shops in small towns, right?

J

Jamie Burton 18:36

We get that often. Yeah, we do well.

J

Jason Duff 18:39

And don't you think like a business, the opportunity to make it a reflection of you is a way to better brand and anchor why you're different. And so we do a lot of tours of bringing out of town people to Bell fountain for the first time. And I love popping in here with them, because their eyes get really, really big, and they usually don't even say anything, besides, they're just taking all in to look around, right? But then they walk up to the menu, and the one thing is, I would say you're what I would call a volume coffee shop. There is not a lot of dilly dally, like you're there to introduce them to menu and help them. But can you speak about, tell me about, like, what your expectations were when you opened here to what you've experienced and you've been open now for how many months at this location? Oh, going on five, right? Yeah, going on five. So you're a newer business, and walk us through what that startup and the new business experience

J

Jamie Burton 19:34

looked like. We honestly, at least I wasn't expecting the volume that we have. Like I said, I worked at another coffee shop. I managed it grew with it. Our top days were like \$300 and I figured maybe a little bit more. Starting out like we're new, there's other coffee shops. People don't know us. We were wrong. The volume. Is crazy. Yeah, we, like I said we were starting up. We thought the back room was going to be for kids, and we need it for stock now. So, yeah, it's crazy.

J Jason Duff 20:12

So from the expectations, I know when you just started was the two of you working in here. The last few times I've been in here, I've seen an additional three or four baristas that you've added, yes, so you've been able to hire employees. So that's a big win. You've also increased the types of partnerships and inventory you have here. You know, you don't have room to do baking here, no. So like, what have you found in your strategy to help other people win with some of those partnerships?

J Jamie Burton 20:39

All local? Yeah. So we have one eye cookie lab. We just began our partnership with them, and she's making excited. Yes, she's making exclusive cookies for us. We have a salty snowman that goes with our drink right now. She just brought it in today. We have baked with love by Kirsten. She does our macaroons. Horsely farm stand. She's actually our gluten free Baker. She's awesome. She's a magician. Love that, yeah? Baked by Becky. She does some sourdough scones and whatnot. Yeah, I think.

J Jason Duff 21:10

And when you have those partnerships and those food products, one thing that I've seen as a marketer that really works is that you're promoting them and tagging their socials and featuring their businesses in a positive light, and they're reciprocating. Can you share why that might be, in part, important for a new business

J Jamie Burton 21:30

starting out? So one, it gets our name out there, yeah. And then it also shows that the kind of people that we are with who are like you say, always say, our tribe, we find you have to find your tribe. And the people that we have are really powerhouses. They're amazing. Most of them are women owned. Oh, yeah. And we just

R Robin Burton 21:50

got the crazy grays.

J Jamie Burton 21:52

Yeah, you got crazy grays in here too. She does our many charcuterie boards. She does quiche, amazing. Yeah.

J Jason Duff 22:00

And when people have those products, there's a good chance they may stop here to get a little snack, a lunch bite, great for kids and families, and it doesn't put that burden on you to have to bake at all, right? So you can focus on what your core skill is and your gift is, which are making really awesome drinks.

J Jamie Burton 22:18

Yeah, for sure. And we love everything local, like you just have, like partnerships are what makes everything easier.

J Jason Duff 22:26

And in your store, you also have retail products. Specifically, you have a used bookstore here, yeah. So new books can be very, very expensive. Tell me about like, how your values are of repurposing great books that people you know gently used, and how you're building that library of content.

R Robin Burton 22:48

We go searching a lot, and we we go to a few used bookstores, and we look for things and through the people that come in here to exchange books. We do have a section of new books now that we offer, but a lot of it is just the love of the books that have already been read and the people have already read them. They really do love to get the used books.

J Jason Duff 23:14

That's great. Well, when I come in, you get very cozy furniture up front here, and the windows are looking out over West Columbus, which is really most of it's been redone, so it's really beautiful. So it's just, it's it? The word cozy comes to mind,

J Jamie Burton 23:29
yeah, we hear that often.

J Jason Duff 23:31
It's very cozy in here, yes. So that's another just differentiator the space, having a really great space, finding the right location, getting the right product, and hiring the right people, those are things that you've unpacked, building your tribe of fans, of people that love your brand and want to evangelize and share with other people why your coffee and your your brand is so unique. What have been other keys or secrets to your success?

J Jamie Burton 23:58
Oh, well, creativity, honestly, like always trying to be innovative. Are canned coffees, well bottled coffees, but they for people. Then what is that? So we take any of the drinks that you want. It can even be like the dirty energy drinks that we have, Red Bull, Lonnie, Lotus, but we put it into a bottle and it has, like a little like pocket can top, and they're good in the fridge for like, seven days. And we have people that get six packs and from like, two hours away, they'll come get their coffee and take it home, keep it in their fridge all week.

R Robin Burton 24:33
It's really cool. People from Springfield, Marysville, Lima, yeah, I can't remember.

J Jamie Burton 24:40
There's a lady who asked me if we would ship our coffee to her in the cans. I was like, amazing. She's three hours away Akron area. And I was like, I mean, I

R Robin Burton 24:49
gave one right at the Children's Hospital. Yeah? Canned coffee, Children's

J Jamie Burton 24:53
Hospital. Yeah, Columbus.

J Jason Duff 24:55

So in a town like downtown Bell fountain, the community is about 14,000 people. But it has become a very tourism focused town that people love to day trip to. That could be because of the great food that we have here. I think that's certainly something that we've talked about and unpacked. Could also be the great shopping that we have here, but particularly for coffee for those, maybe mayors or city leaders or other real estate developers that are listening, how can they reach out to connect with people like you and support you with what you need to open up a coffee shop in a small town? What are the things that you have felt that said, hey, working with small nation like this made this process easy, or also for us to do this again, this is what I would give. The advice for a mobile truck operator, another coffee shop, if they ready to take that next step, work with a building owner on these things.

J Jamie Burton 25:53

Honestly, don't be afraid to ask any questions. Express the needs that you have. You guys have been amazing with literally everything that we could have ever needed here, like it was a beautiful experience. So if you're around and have connections to small nation, use them. But yeah, I mean, honestly, you just have to be willing to listen to the small business owner and understand their needs, wants

R Robin Burton 26:22

and be able to help us. We had to listen to what they had to present what their experiences were and what worked for them, and what they found didn't work at all. That was really good advice, and it really helped us a lot.

J Jason Duff 26:36

So we're going to talk about leasing a building, and especially, you know, going from never understanding anything about leasing a property, what are the fears that pop in your head before you even inquired about what's available?

J Jamie Burton 26:50

So obviously, people, you always hear positive and negatives, and obviously the negatives are louder in your head when you're scared. But asking questions, you have to be straightforward, like if you have questions to ask them.

J Jason Duff 27:04

So let's just talk about some of those negatives. It would be that rent is so expensive I would never want to go there. It would be, oh my gosh, you have to pay a security deposit upfront. How do you come up with that cash utilities? What's it going to cost me to pay my electric bill, my gas bill, and then in some cases, landlords charge for real estate taxes, and they charge for insurance. So like I imagine hearing that all those things sound super scary, scary and paralyze people from even just asking the right questions. So is that? Why? When you first said, I have the truck, the brick and mortar. It's years into the future, because we thought we could never afford it. What's been the reality?

J Jamie Burton 27:49

It's nothing like we thought it would be in a positive way, right? Yeah, our utilities, because everybody always talks about AES, it's not bad, at least not here. We're good, like, Yeah, I mean, it's they all come out. One of the mistakes

J Jason Duff 28:05

is some properties have not been renovated in a very long time, and particularly the space that we're in. And one of the things that we really try to do in working with our contractors that are electricians and plumbers in HVAC folks, is we try to make the property very energy efficient. Some of the steps that go into that is the type of storefront glass that you choose the glass, and you have a lot of glass, like I know, for people that are just listening or maybe don't see on the opposite side of us. The reason why you look so good on the couch is that there's natural light that comes into this space, but that is thermal, insulated glass that is energy efficient, and that where there was a big investment to put that in. The other thing in this is you have LED lighting and a 97% efficient gas forced air furnace. So there's got to be capital to go in to make the building improved and safe. But secondly, to make it energy efficient, and you as tenants benefit from that. So even though the rent number may be here, it's important for you to dig into the property that you might be looking at to know, has it been recently upgraded? What are some of the operational costs? But since you've been in here, you know, do you have kind of a baseline for your square footage, what your utilities run on a monthly basis?

J Jamie Burton 29:18

So I mean, our water's like \$80 and we use a ton of that our electricity, even with the outside, gigantic Christmas decorations, it only went up to like, 300 a month. Yeah, a month. It wasn't bad, yeah. And gas bill, would you say our gas has been, like, still, like \$100 and that's with keeping it on constantly because it's freezing.

J Jason Duff 29:41

So those are things like, in running your equations, you've got the rent, you've got the utilities. The other thing is, is, what were other scarier barriers of entry to like leasing a space and having the courage to sign on the dotted line,

J Jamie Burton 29:55

really, for a coffee shop like us, was the equipment costs. We had equipment in our trailer, but it was not going to be enough for here. So that was something that scared us.

J Jason Duff 30:06

Really bad, yep. So finding the right landlord that may be willing to help with the build out of certain things, whether it could be utility improvements or helping with casework or helping maybe provide, even if you could get access to a little bit of capital or get a loan to buy equipment, those are things that would, again, help you be successful long term, but help a landlord in another town, maybe at least a space that's been empty for a while.

J Jamie Burton 30:33

Yeah, and you just want that connection with them they want you need to be open on both sides, like, hey, like, we need this. Are you? Can you help me with this? And vice versa, and as long as you have a push and pull system, give and take,

R Robin Burton 30:47

take and give. We sat down with Kane, and I said, these are all the questions I have, because these are what was brought to me. And He answered them, just Yeah, perfectly, like every single one he had an answer for. And we were just like, looked at each other, and we're like, okay, let's do it. That's fine. Communication is everything.

J Jason Duff 31:05

And I think also, if you have a repair or a problem, having someone that will respond to you, yeah, and that's been something you know, Kane that you mentioned, is our leasing and property manager, and one of his core gifts is, like, really being an active, good listener, but also sometimes it is replying and being Johnny on the spot, even if it's after business hours. And so I know that's a core thing that we work on internally in our processes to make sure that we're being the best for our tenants and our customers too, because there's a lot of other landlords that maybe say we don't do any repairs or maintenance in a property Good luck. Or you may not hear a reply for weeks or months, yeah. Or maybe they say, Send us a letter and then maybe we'll deal with it. It's like, I don't think in small towns, that works. It is about the level of customer service that you're able to provide, yeah, and I think

R Robin Burton 31:59

even when we've messaged him on Sunday, we have a reply by Monday morning, like it's

J Jamie Burton 32:04

not and I always preface you don't have to answer this right

J Jason Duff 32:09

now, but we'll give him a shout out for that. Yeah, the other thing is about really being successful and finding the right the right space. How of choosing the right location of the businesses you want to compliment you, or the place you want to go, because right, I'll be honest, you're not on Main Street. Right? Main Street has the highest traffic here, particularly in our market. You chose a side street.

R Robin Burton 32:33

Why? Beautiful? It's the corner, it's the windows, it's the Hallmark look of the coffee shop we wanted, it is exactly what we were looking for.

J Jason Duff 32:46

And you also are in walking distance of several other great businesses that

J Jamie Burton 32:50
compliment you 100% Yeah, and

R Robin Burton 32:53
we're getting a new one. We go to the flying pepper all the time. We go to Kiyomi all

J Jamie Burton 32:57
the time. I order sushi,

J Jason Duff 33:01
but yeah, like, you're like, in the antiques vintage

R Robin Burton 33:04
District, 100% Yeah. And some of our wall stuff comes from right next

J Jason Duff 33:08
door at Nest 1896 That's awesome. Well, again, it's a whole experience, but finding the right location, pick your landlord, find the right location, find people that will share transparently, the cost of things up front. Ask the tough questions. If you can negotiate something, or say, we need this, get that up front. Any other advice for success in leasing the right space?

J Jamie Burton 33:34
Honestly, you just have to be willing to take the leap. You have to as long as scope and communication.

R

Robin Burton 33:41

We probably wouldn't have done this if it wasn't for you guys, like the talks we had, the way you explain the leasing and what was going to happen and what we would be paying for and all this. If we wouldn't have had that, it would have been even more scarier, and we would have still been like, you know, I don't know, but everything was laid out for us, and we knew exactly what was expected and what we were going to do, and it was so easy appreciate that.

J

Jason Duff 34:09

Has this business been successful for you very Yes, it has.

R

Robin Burton 34:15

It grows every day.

J

Jason Duff 34:17

Is it what you expected, less than what you expected, far exceeded what you ever imagined?

R

Robin Burton 34:23

Oh, far exceeded. Agreed.

J

Jason Duff 34:25

High five, ladies, nice work. Thank you. Thank you. This Christmas season, I think downtown Bell fountain was truly magical, and it's been intentional over the last few years, with the branding and the mayor planning the flag to become Ohio's Christmas capital. But I don't know I could. Countless people came up to me and said, the way always brewing embraced Christmas really kind of continued to enhance the town and your opening, I think, timed right around the beginning of the Christmas. Miss holiday shopping season, and in the neighborhood here, we've got some great retailers, literally right next door with Nest 1896 there's like 50 small businesses amongst the three floors that are there. But if you're on Main Street, we're four blocks away from the busiest section of the downtown, and I think you found a way to capitalize, with your location, partnering up with other artists to make this decorated in a way that was magical for Christmas. Tell us about like visually, for those that are listening, describe you made a big investment on the outside of

J Jamie Burton 35:37

the space. Yes, yes, yes. Dorsey's, it looked like Christmas puked on her. It was like, huge and loud in a good way. It's actually coming back. Okay? She's working on, Oh, see, I think the

J Jason Duff 35:52

fire department's even happy about that. They're great customers, by the way, right?

J Jamie Burton 35:57

Yes. So she's actually working on a new spring display for us, and we're really excited, but it had giant pieces of popcorn. It had bows. It was crazy. And when I say it was

J Jason Duff 36:09

like a garland that anchored both sides of their store on, I mean, gigantic piece of garland. And the popcorn was probably like two feet by two feet, but it looked cinnamon sticks. Yeah, it just, it just looked magical. And I think part of the theater, the other thing, when you're involved in school, were either involved in music or theater because you have that really, or maybe art, because you've got to, okay, creative bent. Because, I would also say walking in and working in your business and seeing your business is it's very theatrical in here, yes, and it's not, you're just not buying a cup of coffee. You're coming in for an experience. And I think the whole downtown is learning, because when you do that, I've noticed that so many other businesses in the downtown are also enhancing their exteriors, which Dorsey's is Christy her long is an incredible designer, and she makes it all. She makes it all. She hand makes it all. And so it's like thinking ways of other creative partnerships to do that 100%

R Robin Burton 37:06

she's getting ready to do some in here too.

J Jason Duff 37:10

That's awesome. Yeah, as you think about what's next, what is that plan for your business?

J Jamie Burton 37:19

So I think this next year is just going to be a growing opportunity. Our one year for the trailer is in May, but for this our brick and mortar, it's not until September. So growing, figuring out what flows, what doesn't, and then, I don't know. I mean, we're not opposed to second locations. Eventually we we get people asking us quite frequently if we're ever going to open towards Marysville, Lima, Sydney, Springfield, everywhere people are coming. They're like, Will you open one in Florida? And I'm like, What?

J Jason Duff 37:53

No, like, not yet. I don't know. This time of year, it is literally like five degrees outside right now. So Florida might be kind of nice. So the goal is, you want to keep expanding your coffee empire. You want to find ways. I know your roaster is pretty unique and special to you. You're going to deepen that

J Jamie Burton 38:10

partnership with them, Jennings Java and Columbus, they're amazing. I actually, we didn't get our delivery from our former coffee roaster, and for two deliveries, and they got lost, I guess, but I called them up,

R Robin Burton 38:25

like, the nitty gritty, yeah, we were, it

J Jamie Burton 38:27

was bad. I he called me up. He was like, what do you need? We'll get it for you today. And he did, and he did, and ever since then, I was like, Okay, wow. He's like, we really value our customers. We value family. We have, like, we just want to help. And when they did that, we

R Robin Burton 38:41

were like, and they were going to bring it here, and then we we were closed, and then we're like, we'll just pick it up tomorrow. And we went and we talked to them, and

J Jason Duff 38:49

they're wonderful, yeah, having those supplier relationships. And I think some people the internet has made like is removed the personalization of who we buy from and who who our vendors are. But I think doubling down with those supplier relationships, not only can you negotiate contracts and pricing with them, but in those 911 calls it really being able to have them show up. And then the education piece, that's the other thing of of you being that creative and innovative mindset, wanting to learn the best practices as a barista and a coffee operator, they can teach you about that. Yeah, and I'll just ask one quick question as a home person that is moved from K cups and graduated from that to grinding my own beans, any quick like rough the cuff advice to make a great cup of coffee, definitely.

J Jamie Burton 39:43

So your grinder is the most important, and the beans. And obviously the beans, yes, quality, yes, folders is not quality. Okay, yeah. So the we get ours weekly. It's, yeah, roasted, fresh, Mondays, Tuesday. Is shipped out. We're get it Thursday, and we go through it all within the next order before next Monday. So yeah, quality, freshness, and I mean, your coffee pot matters, but not as much as your beans and how you grind it. Great.

J Jason Duff 40:14

I'm set up for success of improving my coffee journey probably is. Am not going to get my own espresso machine quite yet, because I can still depend on yours here. By the way, you get a pretty nice setup here. What's the brand? I can't even say it. Say that five times fast, right? But it's like, I think, is it Italy? Yeah, they're special. And I see it. It's beautiful over there. So no thank you for like sharing that. I'm excited for what's on deck for you as you're building your business, forging these partnerships and collaborations with your fellow downtown business owners, other people that are home based, bakers and makers, and then having all the retail products with the used books and really cool candles and other things that you have in here too. So do just want to thank you for for being on the show today and unpacking these lessons. What would you say for listeners, the best way for them to find you, to follow you and visit your real life always brewing location.

J Jamie Burton 41:19

So we do have Facebook, Instagram and Tiktok we're trying to get better about doing tiktoks. All of them have our locations. We also have square online ordering. So if you search always brewing, you can go on there. It shows you our hours. That's like basically our website. So our hours, it has our Instagram linked, some short videos, and our entire menu, which is pretty vast, but it's on there, and it grows and it grows.



Jason Duff 41:43

Any quick previews of the upcoming Valentine's Day drinks



Jamie Burton 41:47

we did mostly like 80s themed. So we have Purple Rain, which is one of our matches. It's really good. It's like a blueberry cobbler, Matcha with Ube foam. We have a pistachio raspberry that's every breath you take. It's really good. I love that. I'm an 80s kid so and then we have time after time that has it's a strawberry shortcake and has actual shortcake on top with strawberries and whipped cream and stuff.



Jason Duff 42:13

It's really cool, awesome. Well, Jamie and Robin, first off, congratulations on taking that step and having that courage to go from truck to brick and mortar. I'm excited for you. I wish you the best as you continue building your coffee empire and also helping all the other people around you and your ecosystem. And thanks for being a guest on our show today. We appreciate you guys. Thank you.



Ethan DeLeon 42:34

Thanks for listening to this episode of the small nation podcast. Be sure to follow the show for future episodes on your favorite podcasting platform.