

Love What You Love Podcast

Episode 55: Honey with Niki Canotas

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Welcome to *Love What You Love*; I'm Julie Rose. I'm insatiably curious about people and the world around us, and absolutely in love with passion and unselfconscious enthusiasm. Every other week I geek out with someone about the thing that they love, and then I share it with you.

Welcome back! Or, Welcome! I hope your 2022 has started off well, or you know, at least as well as it can, considering. I had a nice, long break from work that lasted well into the new year. I rewatched *Fellowship of the Ring*, I did a lot of cross stitch, I read, watched old episodes of *Time Team*, and I didn't do a damn thing that was productive, and it was so great. It was so great! But I'm back now and I feel really refreshed and ready to bring you the love every other week.

Speaking of bringing the love, I would love it if you could take a few moments to subscribe to the podcast if you haven't already and to rate and review on the platform of your choice, which you can do on Spotify now, apparently. Let's get on to meeting this week's guest.

Niki Canotas is a self-described horizontalist. She's interested in and really good at a lot of different things. But her husband's childhood interest in bees led her to a passion she'd never even considered: Honey. In this episode, we talk bees having lunch together, red honey, misconceptions about local honey, pissy bees, the Valley of Heart's Delight, honey that tastes like Guinness, and so much more. So find out why Niki loves honey and why you might learn to love it, too.

Julie: Hello, Niki! Thank you so much for joining me today!

Niki: Hi there!

Julie: We were talking a little bit before we started recording, and you have quite a varied history. Maybe you could just do a quick rundown on some of those things we talked about as a lead-up to what got you into honey.

Niki: Well, I could think of people in one of two categories, to be basic. Verticals: that was my grandfather, he did half of all the great musicals of all time; *Mary Poppins*, *The Sound of Music*, *West Side Story*. He could do that, a little golf, and bridge. That was it. And I could do a little bit of everything. I've done television, radio, graphic design, game design, financial planner; I just get to do it all, and I'm a horizontal. I could do a little bit of everything, which is why I'm in beekeeping today.

Julie: Love it! So what got you into beekeeping?

Niki: Mike's a mortgage broker and I'm a financial planner and we legally can't talk to each other because there's that bright Chinese wall. And you know, you need something else when he's your second person in your life, your 2.0, the love of your life, and you want something to do together. We said, "Let's get a hobby!"

Julie: I love it! So, why beekeeping and when did you get started?

Niki: We started in 2013 because we said, "No babysitters," no cats, no dogs, no kids, so... bees? You can leave bees alone for a while. And he'd had bees as a kid, and his mom still had the beekeeping equipment. She keeps everything, so as soon as we said, "Bees," she opened the box and said, "Here! Get this out of my house." And over came

ancient beekeeping equipment. We got a hive, and one became ten, ten became 50, then 50 became 150, and we're aiming for 1,000.

Julie: Wow! So, what was it about beekeeping that Mike liked as a kid that, kind of, translated into, "Hey, that's fun. Let's do it now."?

Niki: Well, beekeeping is a wonderful, calming peace that... on the other side of beekeeping is PTSD. It calms the back of your brain, and we all know that Mike is wound too tight. And we just really have to make it as calming a thing in life, not a stressful thing in life, which is pretty funny because we're in a stressful growth curve right now. [laughs]

Julie: So how did you go from one hive to, you know, hundreds and trying to go to a thousand? What was that progression?

Niki: Well, you get swarms, and you get splits (where you take one hive and make two), and you've got a couple over here... And we gave away our honey at first and said, "We made honeeeeeey!!" So, I go on Avery.com, and I make a label, and I've got to put something on the label. "We'll call it The Mike and Niki Honey Company!" Why? Just for chucks and giggles. And it became a company! Be careful of what you write down. *Write It Down, Make It Happen* is a great book. And when you do write things down - [gasp!] - it could happen!

And we became a company because people came back and said, "Oh my gosh, this is the best honey ever!" And I'm like, "Thank you. Thank you. Really, it was the bees." And as we started to do it with six or nine hives, we were like... like blooms, and varieties, we're like, "This one's good. This one's different..." so we didn't blend it together and we said, "We'll try this one. We'll try that one." And people were like, "It's ah-mazing!" And I'm like, "I guess at my age I'm a really good beekeeper." And then it's like... Mike says, "Okay, we're at ten hives. What do we do?" And I say, "Go home or go big because this is what we do! So we're going to go big."

Julie: Is there a specific kind of bee? Like, how do you establish a hive in the first place?

Niki: Well, if you get a swarm, you're getting a random thing in a tree or a cutout from a house and you take them home. When you want to breed them, you get a queen and you ask what kind of queen you want. We get them from all over the country so... My Hawaiian bees sucked in Half Moon Bay, so we went and got bees that were bred for New York so they could handle the cold. There are different... Like dogs and cats, there are different varieties and they have different traits. Like I said, Hawaiian bees didn't do so good in Half Moon Bay.

So we'll get the Carniolans, and the Italians... and the Russians are pissy but they make a lot of honey. And then there's a European black bee. And when you look at hives you can see the different daddies, like, "Oh, there's some different daddies in here." Because she mates with 20 different guys and then she's done for life.

Julie: Is that how you guys started? You found a swarm and then established your own...?

Niki: Oh no, we're much more over-management than that. We talked to a couple people and ordered our bees through a guy named Art. He's a great, old, established beekeeper in the Bay Area. And we said, "We'd like a hive!" So I took my box over to him, he got his bees, and he put them in our box, and he delivered them all strapped up in our backyard. And we dutifully put them under the oak tree where we wanted to put them and he says, "No, they'll be better over here." "No, no! Behind the garage,

under the oak tree!" And they didn't like it there. We were managing them. [laughs]
We eventually moved them because Art was right. [laughs]

Julie: Yeah, so what was it about being under the oak tree that they didn't like?

Niki: It's cold, it's dark, it's not... Bees love sun. And you've got to keep the hive at 98.6°.

Julie: Oh really?

Niki: Isn't it interesting? After 100 million years, they decided 98.6 is a really good number.

Julie: So you have honey from Half Moon Bay, from Campbell, from...

Niki: The entire Greater Bay Area. Soon our Hawaiian apiary's coming online, and...

Julie: And then you also have orange blossom honey and sage honey. So how does that work? How do you know...?

Niki: How do I know what's in the jar? Well, bees are lazy. So you take them to an orange orchard, it blooms for only 20-25 days a year, and now we have to pay to go into orange orchards. Normally we get paid to pollinate, but orange is such an exclusive you have to pay them now. So instead of earning \$200, you pay \$500, so that's a \$700 Delta - in walks the financial people - and you're like, "Dang!"

So, when they're in the orchard, they're going there. If a bee is flying five miles, it's because there is absolutely nothing else available. They will go right here, the energy... They're the best traveling salesmen. "What's the most efficient way to get there and back?" And computer programmers have, like, studied bees to find out, "How do you figure out that salesman route? How do we get the most efficient GPS programming to get from here, there, and back home?" And bees know how to do that after 100 million years.

Julie: Now, do you have, like... certain kinds of bees will like the orange blossom better than, you know, sage? How do you determine what bees go where?

Niki: You take your strongest hives to pollination because they're... they've got a job and weak hives don't pay! So you take strong, big, busting-out-of-the-box hives to the orchards, and they audition, and they grade your boxes. So you take your best hives.

Now, our boutique hives, which is the other half of the apiary, that's all the stuff that my commercial beekeepers think I am such a wackadoodle. We have, on a good day, four hives in Mountain View. Four. It's a foster home. Someone has said, "I have a beautiful garden, let me put them in my backyard, I can support the local bees." And I want a t-shirt that says, "I'm just here to pollinate your tomatoes," right? We're here for the local cucumbers of the neighborhood, and it's our gift, and it makes a little bit.

And someone says, "I need five gallons of Mountain View honey because I live here and I need local honey." I'm like, "Sorry, it comes in four-ounce jars." Why? Because there's only three hives and that's it. [laughs] So, we do what we can.

Julie: There's this... I don't know if it's a myth, maybe you can tell me, that if you eat honey that's local to you it helps reduce your allergy impact. Is that true?

Niki: Ah, here's where my little crusade comes in on the definition of local. I have people in Sunnyvale who say, "I can't possibly eat Mountain View honey," and for those listening, we're talking, what, half a mile, two miles apart? "I can't eat Mountain View honey; I live in Sunnyvale!" I'm like, "Do you know these bees are having lunch together?" Local is a definition where people think it needs to be 750 feet from their house. I'm like, "in

California, if you can smell fires burning from Mount Shasta and you're in southern California and the sky is orange like a bad movie, it's local." Because the wind brings pollen and smoke. So, my little campaign is, "Yes, eat your Sunnyvale. It's okay to eat Mountain View. But eat from Mount Shasta to Big Sur. It's okay!" Because the wind doesn't take a bath at the Golden Gate bridge.

Julie: Right! [laughs] That's fascinating. I'm so glad you busted that myth, because I have to admit, I was on your website like, "Do I really want to get a Half Moon Bay honey because I live in San Jose?"

Niki: [laughs] Right! Well, you know, you could eat the pollen in Texas. Just ask the people in Oklahoma. When the big fires were blooming and the jet stream was bringing smoke into Oklahoma from California. Yes, you do want to spiral out from your house. But when you're traveling and you're at a festival, buy from that guy who's got that table with 40 jars of honey, who's retired, and he's got that little... You know the guy. It's a card table, some honey, and a vinyl sign not hung up straight.

One of my favorite ones is a guy named Rusty. He's that guy! He's at the San Francisco Fort Mason Farmers' Market and he's got 40 jars. I love him to death. He's a passion project on a small scale. I, Go-Big-Canotas, as professional as you can get with the commercial kitchen and every three-letter food license you could possibly want.

Julie: Yeah, how much honey do you guys produce in a year?

Niki: Thousands, and thousands, and thousands of pounds, because when you get into the orchards and stuff you get bigger production. We're about to put 100 hives in Sebastopol. We're trying to see if we can work that one out. And you get 100 hives, and if they do 40 pounds apiece, that's 4,000 pounds.

Julie: Wow. So, how much does it cost to even get a hive up and going?

Niki: Hundreds and hundreds of dollars.

Julie: Really?

Niki: How to make a small fortune in beekeeping is: start with a large fortune. Then once you get it to scale, you can become very wealthy. I don't know if we'll get that way, but it used to be that the wealthiest people I personally knew and had dinner with were my real estate buddies. I know some whales. Some *whales*; They. Make. Money. Then we got into beekeeping and guys who have second, third, fourth-generation beekeeping and they run 20,000 or 30,000 hives across the United States, they're... wow. Because they've got it down, because they've perfected it, they've got the scale.

Scale can do amazing things to production, and they're my wealthiest people. But there's this big dip before you ever get there, and we are in that capitalization stage, the figuring it out. "Oops. That didn't work. How much is that gonna cost me?" [laughs] Every time someone in the company says oops or, "I don't know," Mike and I respond, "How big is the check?"

Julie: So how many employees do you have?

Niki: I think we have five employees and five contractors, and then the commercial teams which do bigger stuff. The boutique team is very different. They're the ones that help, between Mike, and Johnny, and Cassidy, and Laurel, and I. Heck, my assistant Niki even got a bee suit this year. Working on the boutique, local hives, that's handcrafted, small batch. Whereas going into the lemon orchards is a whole different scale.

Julie: You know, when you have, like, a lemon orchard versus an orange orchard, can you tell the difference in the honey? Between a lemon and an orange orchard?

Niki: Yes, and I'm teaching people now because we do a lot of testing. We do a Zoom taste testing, we do in-person taste testing. But at our farmer's markets and festivals we are dishing out and trying to work with those who have... Like me, I have a sommelier palate, so I'm studying for sommelier - I've got to go to Pennsylvania, and mom wants to go to Italy for honey sommelier class - to taste the different notes and the flavors. If you have that skill, you can find it. So yes, honey can taste differently for different people and it has its own flavor profiles too.

Julie: What's the most popular flavor profile that you're selling and what's, kind of, the weirdest one that you still love?

Niki: Right now, I would say orange blossom because people have been trained to ask for orange blossom. It's either that or whatever's in their backyard. Like, "I'm in Mountain View. I must have Mountain View." So, the flavor profiles, like Canola, it tastes like apples or grapes for some people. Other people, it's like, "Wha... why?"

Buckwheat tastes like Guinness beer. And it's a good source of iron. How that little white flower puts iron and makes it opaque brown, I don't know. The bees do that. They get the vote. My red honeys, I love my red honeys. Usually, the red honeys, for me, are the most flavorful.

Julie: And red honeys meaning what?

Niki: When you hold it up to the light it looks red. Deep, beautiful, amber red instead of golden honey brown and... there's light honeys too. But usually, you see light honeys and that amber-brown honey. But like, Campbell in 2017 made a red and it tasted like cinnamon molasses.

Julie: Ooh!

Niki: And Carneros, which is Highway 12 in Napa and Sonoma, that one's a red one and it tastes floral with a little bit of molasses to it. Just because it's red doesn't mean it's going to taste the same. And we just ran out of the 2017, and that was my pride and joy. That was an amazing one.

Julie: That's another question. Is it true that honey, like, never expires?

Niki: Yes. They've found honey in tombs, crystallized, and when they warmed it up... because when honey's exposed to cold, it's not broken, it's just cold and it crystallizes. That's physics. That's science. It's a supersaturated solution. It has no oxygen in it. And that's why bacteria doesn't grow in it because when the bacteria cell gets in honey, the honey sucks all the water out and breaks up the bacteria cell. It goes [pop] because it sucks all the water out of it. And you can use it as a preservative. We sell garlic preserved in honey.

On a good day, if you get a batch out of me, I will preserve lemons in honey. Now those, because of the oil, I don't like the longevity of it. But garlic will get better, and better, and better. Like vanilla. It's amazing. We do roasted garlic and it takes ten weeks of burbling... Like kombucha, it's bubbling, because you've got to get the garlic below the honey because anything above is exposed to oxygen and will mold. So we've got to do the pickle barrel, stirring. It's this little hustle we do, "Who's going to stir the garlic?" And we do that for ten weeks, and we keep the pet, and then after that

we age it seven months, and it just gets better from there. Ten years from now the garlic honey will taste better, just like vanilla. With vanilla, at 18 months you've just gotten on the playing field.

Julie: So, I tried one of your... I tried the turmeric; it was like turmeric-spiced honey.

Niki: Oh, creamed honey!

Julie: Yes! So, what's the difference? What's creamed honey? What's regular honey? Why have a creamed honey? What is that?

Niki: Okay, well, one, a natural state of honey is either runny or crystallized. It's not broken, it's just crystallized. Now we've taken the Dyce Method out of the Victorians (love those Victorian people), you crush the crystal again, and again, and again, and again, and again until they're tiny, and small, and oval, and has that good mouthfeel. Then, how we build Silicon Valley, how physics works, like kombucha, we put one pound of crystallized honey in a big bucket of honey, and you come back three, four, five weeks later and you have crystallized honey that has the same crystal. I'm not crushing 1,000 pounds! I'm going to use science!

Julie: [laughs] Good plan!

Niki: And I get to add spices and make chocolate honey for a living because I can.

Julie: Oh my gosh, yeah. That turmeric spice honey was like... I'm glad it was just a small container because I could've just eaten the whole thing with a spoon. It was so good.

Niki: I'm so proud of that one. That's my own personal recipe. I mean, pumpkin spice is a formula, right? If you don't do it right, it's not pumpkin spice. But that turmeric one's mine. To have flavor and not be medicinal... because some people are like, "We're going to do turmeric for health." Like, no, it doesn't got to be so healthy.

Julie: It tastes good!

Niki: Yes! It's yummy! Put that on your roasted cauliflower, your roasted chicken legs, or a latte.

Julie: What kinds of uses does honey have besides culinary?

Niki: It is great on your skin as a humectant. I'm working on a salt scrub with honey and a sugar scrub because some people don't like salt. I love salt. And then coffee. We're working on a coffee scrub too. So it's got that beautiful beauty stuff. And then honey goes well with oils to make great lotions and stuff, and of course lip balms and creams. But I'm wanting to work on it for people so that they know how to put it on wounds, so that if you're not healing it'll pull out the bacteria because it's... remember the supersaturation part? It'll help lower infections because when it meets the bacteria it sucks the water out of the bacteria and the bacteria dies.

Julie: Honey can help with wound care. Historically, what are some of the other uses?

Niki: Historically, honey... people use it in food. They use it as a medical device, like healing. They use it for facial and skincare. The medicinal sense, the stingless bees of Central America, families will have a log, and it's a stingless bee, and they make these bulbs instead of hexes, and they can't even imagine that we would just, like lather pancakes in this stuff because to them it's medicine. And their little baby... this little log produces maybe a pint of honey a year because they're little, itty bitty, tiny, stingless bees. I got

to work with them when we were beekeeping in Cuba, and they're just fabulous, stingless, little bees in these little boxes. And for families, this is your medicine cabinet.

Julie: I'm presuming happier bees, better honey, so what do you do to take care of them?

Niki: First, we put them in standardized boxes called the Langstroth boxes. Those are those white, square boxes that you see in apiaries now. And it was, once again, the Victorians, that took us from the skep which was wrapped in rope - that's the Winnie the Pooh hive - to this industrial, replicable, harvestable... That's what's caused big honey production, the Langstroth hive box. So you buy a lot of woodenware, and you get them into these things, and you've got to set them up above ground. I don't like them on the ground because the ants can march in two by two. So, you've got to develop your hive stands. The big commercial ones do it on pallets.

You've got to put them in a place where things are blooming. So the commercial bees, they're on the road - rollin', rollin', rollin' - because after oranges bloom for 25 days it's a food desert, so they've got to go somewhere else. Now, when I put them in Mountain View, you all have to keep planting things that bloom all year long because they're hungry. And when it's not blooming, it's called a dearth. So, they have to have environment first, and if they're not, we have to feed them pollen patties, spirulina patties. We give them sugar syrup that has yogurt-like bacterias in them for their biomes. And we buy this stuff by the pallet.

So when everyone thinks you put bees in and you get free honey... yeah, no. Pallets of bee food, pollen substitute... spirulina is a different kind of protein and has oils in them to make them healthy, and then the sugar syrup. When they're hungry, you've got to feed them, and those are during the dearths.

My bees in California are spoiled because they get fall all winter long. It doesn't shut down. In Vermont, they shut down and almost go to sleep for 100 days and don't pee for 100 days because they're buried in snow and they're going to freeze. Remember that 98.6? Well, if they leave the hive they're going to freeze and die. But on that warm, sunny day after a snow, it's a potty break. Everybody runs and goes pee because the air is warm and then they run back in.

Julie: [laughs]

Niki: But we have to visit them weekly. We probably visit our hives 40, 60 times a year to take care of them. You've got to look at them, feed them, take care of the mites because the mites has been a life-changing event for us. We have to space them, prioritize them. They're hoarders, you know. As they grow you've got to put more boxes on them, then you gotta take the boxes off. So, our apiaries are on a 400-mile loop for the boutique hives.

Julie: Do they have favorite kinds of flowers and veg that they are pollinating?

Niki: Well, they're going to go to anything that produces more nectar and they're going to go to anything that produces... the pollen gets packed on their little hips. They have these little bee... Their legs are like these little suitcases they can pack on the back for the pollen to bring it back. And they're going to go things... and nature has learned to work with them in that they bloom at different times. You could make a garden - I would love to do this - that would be a clock. "This blooms at noon. This blooms at one. This blooms in the afternoon..." so that the buffet can always be open.

So, it's a battle between the plants and the bees on who they want to go to. So, that's why they don't all bloom at the same time. That's why you have morning glory; it blooms in the morning. And there's something that has nectar released in the late afternoon to say, "Yeah, over here." And the field bees will fly their little wings out 'til they're shredded. That's literally what they do in the last parts of their life. They don't make wax; they don't clean anything. A field bee will fly to bring back and do her life's work, a 12th of a teaspoon. And that 12th of a teaspoon is just the tip of your pinky. That's her life's work. She needs to leave that behind so that the winter bees can make it to spring and keep going.

Julie: Wow. Wooow.

Niki: And the last three days, she brings back water. Her job is to bring back water. So you want to help? Plant something that blooms. Plant a pollinator. Basil, don't care; plant something. If 30 million Californians planted something, that would be 30 million more plants. Then, put out a dish of water with rocks, that's a start. Bonus points if you can get a babbling little fountain. If you put out a fountain and a hummingbird feeder, you will change your whole ecosystem.

Julie: The water fountain and the rocks is just to have a place for the bees to rest, get a little sip.

Niki: Right, but they like running water better. So if you can do a fountain... and now with solar-powered fountains... Everyone, put out a little water fountain because we're losing environments. We're losing... We've blacktopped so much stuff. I live in the Bay Area and we've gone from the Valley of Heart's Delight to Silicon Valley, where we were the world's producer. Why were the railroads out there? Because Campbell was the prune capital of the world and you needed to ship the dried fruit back. Then they got good enough to ship fresh fruit back, and that's what built California. The first bees were... There's debate on the first bees on the West Coast, but at the San Jose airport, there's a plaque. "First Bees in California," between Terminal A and Terminal B, because that used to be a ranch. And that's not who we are anymore. It's the *airport*.

So, we pollinate the last ten acres of apricots in Sunnyvale. We're here to support local farmers, to give our heritage... and the critters someplace to live, and the water to drain into the aquifers because we need water. We can't dam up Yosemite. We already did Hetch Hetchy. We've got to figure out how to get the water back in the ground. And my ultimate is I'd like to be on these farms and have the third graders come and visit us, pull out a carrot, look across the field, see where the bees are, and learn that carrots aren't these little nuggets coming in a plastic bag at Safeway.

Julie: Are there kinds of fruits, vegetables, whatever, that bees really like, or are they literally just like, "Gimme what you got, I will pollinate anything"?

Niki: Yeah, they will go to the one with the most nectar; whoever's the biggest nectar producer. That's why fruit trees do really well. When fields of clover and it's raining enough, they love clover. But like now, with the drought, fields of clover haven't been around. And clover's done because it's between orchards. "Where are we going to put the bees? Well, this doesn't bloom for a while," so we park them in a field of clover, they fill up the hive, "Okay, now it's on to the apples." There's big circuits... 85% of all commercial bees come to California in February for the almond pollination because it's the single largest pollination event in the world.

Julie: What?!

Niki: Yes, it is. And I always like to joke that in Cuba they were trying to tell us about organic methods like, "Your bees never leave your county." 85% of all bees in America come to California like a Woodstock event, all loving and playing with each other. And that's why all of the mites and diseases get to mix because they're all here! And whoever doesn't come... there's these big circuits, like a water flow, in the United States to blueberries, sunflowers, peppers, watermelons, apples; these circuits that these bees travel on, but most of them come to California for the almonds because it's a huge income for us and we have six million acres of almonds in California now.

Julie: And they take up so much water.

Niki: Well, they're very good at the dripping system. We're trying to work with them and Apis m. to teach them to make groundcover so there's something blooming before the almonds bloom, which is healthier for the bees. It's going to help the biome of their land and they're going to use less water. But there's this industrial... "Trees. Dirt. We're good." They used to flood the fields and now we're teaching them to do drip irrigation and we're trying to teach them to plant something in between to help the biome and use less water. It's a whole system.

Julie: So this is kind of a different track here, but what is it like working with your partner?

Niki: Oh, yes. Ten years ago when this was, "Oh, let's do beekeeping!" We're in this growth mode now; we're self-funding this and self-financing this with, you know, every credit union known to God because you need trucks. So we're in that stressful growth mode right now of, like, "Augh! We've got to get to the other side of profitability!" because it costs so much money to run a honey company, but our income has to grow. And covid made it very different, and we're accelerating, but being financial people we know it's going to be... the profitability's on the other side, and that stresses things out.

Like right now we're trying to do 10 Bears of the Bay Area because it was a drought, so we don't have a lot of honey, but we're trying to make 400 boxes with ten bears each. That's 4,000 bears. We're hand bottling because we haven't bought the machine that bottles the bears yet. So, Mike is hand-filling and hand-labeling 5,000 bears in a short period of time. We're tired! So you're like, "I love you dear, I'm happy, and why are we arguing about this?" Yes, that is the stress of growth. We love working with each other, and it's all really great, but we're in that stress growth. That parabolic lift is happening. [deep sigh]

Julie: And now, you're both still doing other jobs. Your day jobs.

Niki: Oh yes. How to fund a growth company is to keep your day job. But we've both been in the business 30 years so we don't have to work nine to five. And with cell phones and computers, it's flexible time. So, Mike works in the morning on mortgages, beekeeps during the day, and then in the afternoon, early evening, he checks in with his clients again. And he's got this rhythm and gets it done. And that's how entrepreneurialism works, and that's how you finance a company like this because...

You know, we bought five or seven trucks this year. Wow. Well, my people can't take their little Mini Cooper to a farmer's market with a booth. If anyone sees our booths on Instagram and such, we're not that guy with a card table.

Julie: So, you know, you're a horizontalist...

Niki: Yes. [laughs]

Julie: So, what are you looking at on the horizon that's beyond honey?

Niki: Oh, that is funny. I'm right now wanting to build a food commissary so that our bottling company shares space with a food commissary and people who had a challenging past come in and learn how to beekeep, learn how to work a food booth, then they can work for a food truck, they can then lease a food truck, buy a food truck. Give them the path and they'll... media gulch. Want to learn how to do social media? Learn how to do social media for other people. You're really about being in accounting? Let's get you in the business gulch and you can learn how to do those damn taxes we all gotta do.

And have a system that... Because if I'm not bottle every day, my plant is sitting empty. So, if people can be using my kitchen, now I have an asset that's making me money instead of costing me money and I'm empowering society. So, I give you a path to find out who you are. That's my goal.

Julie: It's so funny, this conversation ended up in a much different way than I anticipated, and that's awesome!

Niki: Well, I want people to understand that you can use any vehicle, and I picked honey, to find out passions that work for you. And like I said... Can I do QuickBooks? Sure, but I'll do it at the exclusion of everything else. Because everyone's got their jam, you know? And I want everyone out there to find their jam. I want them to find their jam. What makes them excited to do this? Like you say, love what you love, I'm working too hard! I better love this because, you know... Yeah, we are working hard.

Julie: Niki, this has been a joy to talk with you about honey and about your business. I'm so grateful for the time and I really appreciate you sharing your passion with us.

Niki: Push my button, I'll geek out on honey any time.

You can find Niki at MikeAndNikisHoney.com and on Instagram [@MikeAndNikisHoney](https://www.instagram.com/MikeAndNikisHoney). Of course I'll include links to everything in the show notes, as well as links to Niki's favorite nonprofits and mine too. Huge thanks to Niki for sharing her passion with us today.

Just a reminder that you can find this podcast on Instagram [@LoveWhatYouLovePod](https://www.instagram.com/LoveWhatYouLovePod), on Twitter, [@WhatYouLovePod](https://twitter.com/WhatYouLovePod), and the website is LoveWhatYouLovePod.com.

All of the transcripts for *Love What You Love* are available for everyone on the website. Thanks to Emily White, transcription magician and proprietress of The Wordary. If you need transcripts, reach out to her at Emily@TheWordary.com. The music for *Love What You Love* is called "Inspiring Hope" by Pink-Sounds. A link to that artist is included in the show notes.

As always, thank you so, so much for listening. Let's hang out again soon.

Links:

Find Niki on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com), [Twitter](https://twitter.com), and MikeAndNikisHoney.com

Niki's Favorite Nonprofits:

[Apis M](#)

[Santa Clara Bee Guild](#)

My Favorite Nonprofits:

[Humane Society of Silicon Valley](#)

[Southern Poverty Law Center](#)

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