

Transcript

00:00 You're listening to the My Simplified Life Podcast and this is episode number 224.

00:09 Welcome to the My Simplified Life podcast, a place where you will learn that your past and even your present don't define your future. Regardless of what stage of life you're in, I want you to feel inspired and encouraged to pursue your dreams, simplify your life, and start taking action today. I'm your host, Michelle Glogovac, and I'm excited to share my stories and life lessons with you while taking you on my own journey.

00:37 This is my simplified life. Hey friends, welcome back to another episode. I'm your host, Michelle Glogovac. Today, I have one of my favorite people. I came into contact with her because of another full circle moment. I don't know if you recall on my Instagram the other day, a follower said that she found my book because she saw the pie cover that was made of it.

01:04 and she had found the Pie Lady because of Eve Ronsky, who in Unicorn Space mentions the Pie Lady. While I was interviewing, Eve Ronsky had to read Unicorn Space as well before interviewing her, and I also came in contact with the Pie Lady, Pie Lady books, Stephanie Hockersmith, you can call her Steph, and when I saw...

01:28 the beautiful pies she makes out of book covers, I fell in love. It instantly became a dream of mine to see my book cover as a pie on her Instagram page. So you can bet when I got that pub date, I ran right to Steph and said, please make me a pie. And she did. And not only did the pie turn out beautiful, but we've started a friendship. And so I am so excited to share with you

01:57 what Steph's story is to how she's become Pie Lady Books and how she's created this successful business that landed her on Good Morning America, the Today Show with 97,000 Instagram followers all from her kitchen doing what she absolutely loves. So get ready to make a new friend in Steph fall in love with more books and pies and this wonderful human being.

02:26 Hi, Steph. Hi, it's so good to be here. Oh, I am so excited to talk to you. Just 15 minutes has already gone by and we're grinning ear to ear and now we get to record finally. I love it. We can talk all day. I really think that. Oh, this is going to be fun. I know it will be. Can you introduce yourself to everybody, please? Yes. I am Stephanie Hockersmith, but I go by Steph, and I run Pie Lady Books on Instagram, which started as a...

02:52 passion project to share the books I love in a unique way through my pie art and has ended in, well ended, but is currently now turned into a business where I get to help support authors and work with them to promote their books in a really unique way and also draw readers to the books that I'm loving through my pie art. So that is what I do. I love it. And we were just talking about how I found you and it was...

03:17 Full circle because someone just said to me that they found me because of you and they found you because of Eve Rodski And I found you because of Eve Rodski. I read unicorn space. I interviewed Eve and I was like wait There's up high with book covers and I remember

coming to your page and I was like this is amazing It is They're gorgeous. And the moment I started following you I said to myself, okay, this is my goal I was in the middle of writing the book. It wasn't done

03:46 But I'm like, my book cover is going to be on a pie. That was a total goal. And so then the moment that I got to reach out to you and then see, I could cry right now. It's beautiful. My book is a pie. I can cry. That is such a huge honor to have people believe in what I do and then for also for it to be so meaningful for authors, because that is, you know, reading saved my life, you know? So for me to be able to help highlight authors that I love or books that...

04:15 people have poured their heart and soul into and it to be so special for them, you know, the authors that it means the world to me. So thank you. That's such an honor. So how did this all come about? Because you didn't just like everybody, we didn't graduate high school and be like, I'm going to do this. And it was a brilliant business. And that was the end. Yeah. No, it was very much the last thing I ever expected to be doing. I've always been a reader and a baker. I

04:44 grew up baking for fun. I never actually made pies though, until I got really, really sick in my early twenties and ended up having severe brain damage, multiple seizures a day. We couldn't figure out what was wrong. We did all the tests and scans and I was in a wheelchair or a walker and could barely talk. I mean, I was just a totally different person. This lasted about a year. Then we finally got a miracle diagnosis that I am really severely allergic to gluten.

05:11 and I am one of the 10% of people with celiac disease, that number may be higher now, but that struggle with gluten attacks, so basically when I eat gluten, it would attack my brain, my immune system would attack my brain. And so that's what was happening, and it was so crazy. I could never have ever imagined that, ever. So I was grateful to have such a simple answer, but it's very much a lifestyle change. You kind of revamp everything. We had to be really, really careful.

05:40 My husband went completely gluten-free with me. And to thank him, I decided like, I'm going to start making pies because he loves pies. And I decided I was going to make a really delicious gluten-free pie. And up until then, everything I'd seen that was gluten-free and baked, like it looked gluten-free, right? It like looked kind of gross. Like you didn't, you know, you eat with your eyes as well as your stomach. And you know, you, it's like, oh, okay, why would we want to eat that? And I will be honest, my first couple of pies were not amazing.

06:09 But I found just this really calming, I found the process of creating and rolling out the dough and then coming up with really beautiful designs and seeing how to work with gluten-free dough, which is traditionally trickier to be really soothing and like calming and like healing for me. It was kind of like my therapy. And alongside of that, reading really kept me going just because I was in my early 20s when this hit and.

06:35 all of my friends were very much just living their lives. And so I was very behind in so many ways and felt very alone. And the journey of healing the brain damage that occurred was long and tedious. And I remember just sitting and staring at the coffee pot. I couldn't figure out if

I wanted to make coffee that day. And I cried for like two hours because I just couldn't figure out. It was just, everything was hard, right? And so I didn't know how much of my brain would heal. I didn't know what...

07:04 damage had been done for about 10 years. I kind of just worked on healing and worked very low maintenance jobs, you know, when I could for a long time, I couldn't work at all. Um, and read and then about seven years ago, right when actually six years ago, I'm sorry, I had just had my second son. Well, he, he, I think he was about a year and I decided I'm going to start an Instagram account. I didn't know that bookstagram was even a thing.

07:33 But I was like, I'm going to start this account because I want to share the books that I'm loving, the books that saved my life. And I also want to kind of feature my pie art. At that time, there were a few people doing pie art, but you know, cake artistry is really the thing, like the fondant and all of that. Pie art is traditionally, I don't want to say harder because, you know, I think cake decorating is really hard, but the dough is difficult to work with, and you know, especially gluten-free dough. And so I wanted to kind of improve on that and share that.

08:03 What started as kind of a love letter to the authors of the books who saved me turned into this kind of iconic, not to toot my own horn, but kind of iconic thing within the book world. Like the authors wanted a pie for their book and they thought this was so cool. And I got to work with these different publishers and book clubs and authors to help highlight these really incredible books in my own unique way. And it's very much my own little...

08:31 niche, my own kind of little zip code, and I'm so unbelievably grateful for it. And I will say, I was never artistic. I didn't think I had an artistic bone in my body. And so to discover this niche I had buried down there through this process of healing was such a gift because never in a million years could I have imagined this world. And they're so beautiful. Thank you. It's awesome that you get to work with all of these covers too, because it means that no two days, no two pies are the same. Right.

09:00 which I was thinking about that this morning too, as I thought about you, of how you get to wake up and it's something totally new. Yes, you're baking a pie, but it's totally new and that creative process just makes it more fun. I feel that way with my clients of like, I'm going to tell a different story and I get to do something a little more unique every single day. So I get how incredibly...

09:23 rewarding that would be from the creative side. Yes, absolutely. So who eats all the pies? Because I know that people have asked me, they're like, she makes all these pies? Yes. I'm thinking that you don't actually make a pie for every pie. That's such, yes, actually, that's the number one question I get. And typically I just say, I give them to family and friends, which is true. But when I started making almost a pie a day, I was like, this is a lot of pie, you know?

09:50 So what I started to do to save money on cost ingredients and to not waste food, basically I make a base and a filling at the beginning of the week. And then I'll create a top topping for it,

like for the Instagram picture. And then I will tear that one off, create a new one the next day. So I'll make a pie every two to three days so that the filling still

10:18 still fresh, still good, but it's, you know, so I don't bake every single one. So I'm probably baking like every other or every two pies, every two or three pies that I make. So. That's still a lot of pies. It's still a lot of pies. Yes, I think my husband's sick of them at this point. He's like kind of over it, but I do have an awesome gluten-free community here in Colorado Springs and they love.

10:43 free pies. So they are- Oh yeah, who doesn't love free pie? Yeah, exactly. I wish I was your neighbor. I know. And I wish so badly I could deliver them to the authors, right? Like here, that's the goal someday to be able to find a way to be able to send an author their pie or I'm kind of in the process of doing research on what kind of boxing I would need to ship the pies as like a gift to the author, because that's ideally what I would love to do. But we're not quite there yet. The designs are so fragile. I'm scared that when they get there, it'll just be like,

11:12 a mess, you know? Yeah. And then do you bake what we see or is that a pre-baked? That's pre-baked because otherwise the colors and everything would be a little funky, right? Yeah. The colors do dim. And so I like the bright pops of color for the page to really highlight the book. I love this. And so when this started growing and growing, did...

11:36 publishers and authors just start reaching out to you? Or have you had to do any legwork on your own to build this into a business? I have, I will say it did kind of come accidentally. I was, it was March of 2022, and I was heading to the Today Show in New York. And I thought, you know what? I think I'm just gonna start offering commission spaces to see if there's anyone interested in like, like hiring me to create their books. And I got.

12:06 just flooded with requests. And I did not expect that at all. I thought maybe like one or two people would be like, yeah, that'd be fun. And so I did mean to do it, but I will say it kind of like took me by surprise how interested people were. And so the last couple of years have been a really unique, it's been, I mean, kind of learning as I go, I kind of got thrown into the deep end and trying to figure out how do I run this successfully as a business. This year I have to, I am taking significantly less commissions so that

12:35 I am also working on, I mean, every commission I take is something I creatively am inspired by, or want to, you know, want to read, or want to, you know, post about. But I, there were other books I was reading in my free time that I wasn't sharing because, you know, I was so busy. And so this year, I'm kind of still absolutely doing the commissions, because that's like the main part of my business, but kind of spacing them out a little bit more so that I can work on other projects as well, like.

13:03 you know, really finally getting my website up and running and getting, you know, other aspects of the business, starting an online book club, things like that, that I've been wanting to do to kind of all incorporate into the brand. But I have done legwork. There are, you know, people I've reached out to and I'll mention, you know, hey, here are the spaces I have available.

But I will say I was very, very blessed, grateful that there was so much interest at, you know, at the beginning. And

13:30 you never know how long that will last, right? Like, is this just a flash in the pan? Is this just kind of like a, ooh, this will be fun now. And the fact that it's still kind of a, the thing that authors want to do that allowed me to do for them is just such a gift. Well, and it's so big because it's not only you get this beautiful pie made out of your cover, but your Instagram following is not too shabby, my friend. You know, I think it went 79,000. 97, yeah. 97, oh my.

14:00 See, that's free publicity too. So we might wanna look at you upping your prices. No. Yeah. I mean, cause that's, you also read the books. I do, yeah. So you're reading the book, you're making the pie, you're giving away this publicity. Oh, we're gonna talk after this. Yeah, Eve has mentioned the same thing. She's been like, we need to talk about your prices. And I'm like, okay. After my next book, okay? No. Sounds good. No, we'll talk about it. And then maybe I get like a friends and family discount later. Yeah, absolutely, yeah.

14:29 when you come back after so many times, you then get a discount. But yeah, yeah, you did. This is amazing. And you, what does your family think? They're, they're so proud. I think it took a little bit to realize, you know, especially even for my husband, that it was no longer a hobby. Like I think, you know, he kind of had it, we had to have a couple of conversations about like, this is my job now, you know, so, and that was good. Those are.

14:57 good conversations to have, but he's very proud. And my mom absolutely loves it because she's kind of my reading partner in crime. And she loves seeing the pies I create. She's very artistic. So she loves seeing that and my boys are really proud. So it's been such a gift. And because I didn't finish school, I had to leave because I was so sick. And the long journey of healing, I just didn't, I never thought there'd be a way I could work in publishing. And

15:23 So for me to be able to work in the publishing world in my own way is such, I mean, I keep saying this, but it's such a gift, it really is. I'm so grateful. And it's so needed. You know, the publishing industry is so, it's wonky. I mean, I'm sure you're getting earfuls now working with so many authors, but it's just a, it's a shit show, friend. Yes, it is. Well, when like, when you were like, you're so patient with my date, I'm like, oh my gosh, I understand the public, it's like.

15:51 Oh, we pushed this back. Oh, we're not doing this copy here. You know, and so I always really want to work with the authors I'm working with. Just be understanding because I know that the publishing world is just crazy. And you never know. Mine was a mess. You know, five times it changed. I felt so bad. Like, oh, no, you must think I'm like some nutty. Oh, yeah, I'm changing my date again. It's not really me. You're not the only one. I promise you it's it's pretty it's pretty common. You know, I'm and I want to work.

16:19 with people to be able to help promote and be an easy part of the publishing process if I can. You know, like be an easy part of the marketing and publishing process just because it's crazy. And I'm kind of, I'm removed from it. You know, I'm on my own little island, but I like being

able to help support the authors. One of the things that I loved and one of the reasons why I really wanted this too was because you do a lot of novels.

16:45 Yes. And I felt like a nonfiction book was going to gain some other attention because it's not the norm. And I've talked to bookstagrammers about my book and they've been like, oh no, your book is not really my type. I'm like, that's why I want you to focus on it because it's so different. And I mean, I've seen, if anyone's thinking about it, I've already seen book sales because of my pie. Oh, good. So it's a no brainer, you guys. Well, thank you. I've had people...

17:13 contact me after your time. Oh, I need to read this. Oh my goodness. I need to read this or even other, you know, new authors who are start working on building their own businesses that I recommend you all the time. I'm like, you need to read her book. Your book is such a it's it's oh my gosh, I just totally lost my train of thought. It's very user friendly and that like you you communicate important and valuable content in a way that feels manageable. And it's like, Oh, I can do that. Okay, I can do that. I can do that, you know?

17:42 I was even hesitant because I was like, Michelle said not to go on podcasts until my website was up and my website's not up yet, but I'm going to go on it anyway. That's so everybody knows how to get ahold of you. So we'll make sure and I'll help you after this. I love your advice. I mean, I am very, very helpful and I am all for women in business and empowering other women. And so I felt your voice was so incredible. And I'm glad. I don't know that I would have known to pick up your book.

18:11 had you not contacted me because they hadn't seen it, and I typically do just read fiction. I don't branch out to nonfiction all that often. And so to have someone say, hey, here's my book. And then I read it and I was like, this is gold. This is gold. What if I had missed this? So I am so grateful to you for reaching out to me. Oh, thank you. And I love, as I'm talking here, I'm like,

18:33 we'll have to do more together because the whole book is based on a dinner party. And like, how great is it that you make pies while there's your dessert for the dinner party everybody? I love that. It all comes together. Yes, it does. Yeah, I so appreciate that. And I think that as a nonfiction author, we need to think more outside of the box too, which is what I've tried to do in my publicity and marketing and all of that stuff. And this is

19:01 this is great for anyone listening that has a nonfiction book. You don't have to just stay in your lane. I feel the same way for fiction authors because I get them on the podcast side who are like, well, I can't really talk about my book. How do I do that? You talk about yourself. Let's talk about you. Let's get to know you. Absolutely. I love that. It's such a great lesson that you don't have to stay in one lane. You can be creative and do something fun.

19:29 Oh, I just love what you do. I love your story. I love how you had this life moment where you didn't know what was going to happen. And you just, you went into your passion and like, I like baking and you incorporated the fact that you have to be gluten-free. So all of your pies are gluten-free. That's incredible. Thank you. And now you've built a business. I know it was just such a

19:54 Wow. I mean, I have put in a ton of work, so I don't want to make it sound like it's accidental, but it also is so surprising to wake up in the morning and be like, I get to do this. I get to create pieces of art and talk about books for a job. I'm pinching myself. It's just amazing. I totally get it because I'm like, oh, I get paid to read your book and then help you, the author, get it out into the world. It's really incredible to be able to do such a thing, and it is such a gift.

20:25 I love it. What was it like when the Today Show reached out to you? That was amazing and surprising. I had been on Good Morning America right before COVID hit. And that was actually kind of accidental. I didn't know I was going to be on the show. I thought I was just bringing pies for them to feature on the show. And then I got there and they were like, okay, let's get you to makeup and we'll get you mic'd up and here's what you say. And I was like, oh, I'm going.

20:51 So that was a bit of a surprise and they were so sweet. They had like a dressing room anyway. So that had happened in 2020 and then the world shut down and I had kind of taken a step back from Instagram. Things got very chaotic, you know, everywhere in the world to 2020. And I had kind of- You have kids and they were at home. Yes. And you know, personal things happening. And so I'd kind of taken a step back from my business. And then at the beginning of 2022,

21:15 I wasn't quite taking commissions yet, but I was working toward that goal of being able to help authors on a professional level. Then in 2022, I was like, okay, I feel ready to dive back into this. I thought I was going to need... I didn't think I was on anyone's radar anymore. I mean, I'm followed by... I have some big followers in terms of book clubs and things like that, but I didn't know if they even paid attention to what I did. To get...

21:41 the Today Show to reach out and say, we really want to bring you on the show to celebrate the third anniversary of Read with Jenna. I was shocked. I had no idea I was even on their radar. So it was such a huge moment. And it felt like a big confirmation to me that this is what I'm supposed to be doing. It's like, yep, you're back. And here's the confirmation of that. And then to also reach out that same week and just do a post that says, hey, if you're interested in commissions, I was kind of just like beta testing basically to see if it would be an interest.

22:09 And to get the response that I did, I mean, it really, really did feel like such a confirmation that I'm in the right place doing the right thing. And so that was, it was amazing. And Hoda and Jenner were just fantastic. So fun. I wish I could have just hung out with them all day. I'm jealous. Yeah, they were, they were so fun. So now a question for you on the business side, because this is something that I struggle with as I continue to grow of.

22:33 You need to not be so hands on. That's what my therapist tells me. That's what, you know, anybody who's scaling a business tells me. So how do you see the business growing to the point that. Can you remove yourself partially? I don't think you, I don't know how you can do that. So how do you grow it without overwhelming yourself? That's such a great question. And honestly, something.

22:58 Honestly, that's kind of one of the reasons my website isn't up yet, because I've taken the last couple of years to really process through what I want this to look like and how I want this to grow. You know, it's, I want to be a, when people think of Pylatty books, I want it to be a force for good in the book world, a place that brings joy and also brings to light these really important stories, whether fiction or nonfiction, and highlights authors that are doing this amazing work. And I really want it to be a space that uplifts others.

23:28 I would love to see it grow into book clubs around the world. And I would love to see it grow into a space where I can share various desserts and party planning ideas or desserts to pair with books or book questions. And I think those are some things I could probably start to outsource. I don't know that I would ever outsource my pie art, not that people can do it. But that is such a special part of me. And it's how I see the book or how I want to work with.

23:58 the dough, I think that's something I will always do. But if I could expand the brand in terms of being even more of an outreach for books and encouraging a love of literacy and highlighting different things, I think I probably could outsource that a bit. I don't know when that day will come. I am too hands-on as well. I have such a hard time letting go of any piece of it, which I will admit is probably slowing me down a little bit. But everything is so deeply-

24:28 personal right now. It feels like my baby. So it's really hard to say, oh, hey, yeah. But I think there are so many talented people out there and easily someone could work on the book club side of things or different things like that. So those are kind of my preliminary thoughts. I don't know exactly where it'll lead. And that's the exciting part. I had no idea it would even lead here. So who knows where it'll be in five years. Oh, I love it. Oh, you're going to, it's going to be even bigger. I mean, you've already done GMA in the Today Show. So.

24:57 For a lot of people, they're like, oh, that's it. You read it, you know? But yeah, I see so much coming for you. And like people, people love you there. I mean, you look around at who's following you, who talks about you, how people are finding you. And you're right. It's big names that are what are bringing us to you, which is awesome. And

25:19 You should be so proud. This is amazing. Thank you. I'm such a fan of you. Just you as a person. I'm a fan of you. I read your book and I was like, I think I'm in love with her. She is amazing. I mean, oh, my gosh, we're friends. We are. If I would have known we were in Colorado Springs.

25:35 I think it was before COVID. So if I would have known then- Whenever you're back, please let me know when we have to get together. In the next couple of years. I'll tell you, we do a World War II reunion every summer for my father-in-law's division. So we did Colorado Springs one year. And I think that's gonna come back into the circuit hopefully in the next couple of years. Where are you located? I don't know. San Jose. San Jose, okay. Yeah. Awesome. We will get together. I'm, so for now, everyone can find you on Instagram, right? Yes. Before-

26:04 You bought the domain, right? Yes, I did. That has been purchased for a long time, way before any website talks. I was like, I got to get this. So that is my... Yes. So share with everyone

how they can find you on Instagram and what to look forward to, and if they want to commission. Yes. How? The best way to find my work right now is on Instagram at Pylatee Books, and then to contact me, emailing me at [pieladybooks at gmail.com](mailto:pieladybooks@gmail.com).

26:32 And then I am also on Facebook under Pie Lady Books. I have a Facebook page as well, but it's typically a lot of similar content to what you see on Instagram. And that is it right now. The hope is to have my website up and running in the next month or so. And then I have a lot of really fun ideas. I wanna do like Pie Lady merch and I wanna, you know, create like, and the thing is, is I have to kind of go into some like with the copyright laws and stuff, cause I would love to create like different things

27:02 the pies I've made on them and see what that means for the authors, like bring the authors in on that and kind of highlight their book in other fun ways, you know? And so I have a lot of, I have a lot of ideas, but we're not quite sure where it'll all lead yet, but definitely the website's the next, the next step. So. Oh, I love it. Steph, I, we are.

27:22 Friends, we are really good friends now. We are, yep. We're gonna keep this conversation going. Even after everybody stops listening, we're still gonna talk. Absolutely. I adore you so much. Thank you for everything you've done for me and for every author out there. It's so greatly appreciated. You're literally making dreams come true that we get to see covers. Thank you. Friends, I love Steph's story of how this came about, how...

27:51 She was simply doing something that she loved to do, read, bake, and bake something that was good for her as a part of healing and for it to have become such a huge success. It makes me so proud and happy for her and I know that big things are coming. I want this to be a story that resonates with you so that you understand that whatever it is that's going on right now, more can come of it

28:22 You get to do what you love in life. So go after those dreams. Live out every day to make sure that you are happy and fulfilled and the rest will come. I know it will. Go follow Pie Lady Books because you'll be inspired not only by the beauty but by the books she shares. And go and message, engage with Steph because she is simply a wonderful, terrific human being.

28:51 and I am so proud that I get to call her my friend.