

The Zest S12 E13

Kim: [00:00:00] Everybody wants good, healthy food and they want it to taste good, and they wanna know where it kind of comes from. 'cause most people think it comes from the grocery stores.

Dalia: I'm Dalia Colon, and this is The Zest, citrus seafood, Spanish flavor, and southern charm. The zest celebrates cuisine and community in the Sunshine State. Today, finding local food fast.

Many of us would like to eat more farm fresh foods, but we don't always have the time, the space, or the expertise to produce it ourselves. That is where Farm Pixie comes in. Farm Pixie is a free online marketplace that steers us to fresh local products. Like meat, eggs, bread, bath items, and a whole lot more.

Founder Kim Kenney owns a small farm in Dade City, and she visited our studio at WUSF Public Media. In this conversation, Kim shares what led her to start [00:01:00] Farm Pixie, and how supporting local farmers benefits us all.

Kim: I am Kim Kenney. I'm the founder of farm pixie.com. It is an online farmer's marketplace. That's free for everybody. Free. Free.

Dalia: How does it work?

Kim: Basically, it's somebody, anybody that wants to grow or has produce in their backyard that may want to sell it for, maybe it's their side hustle, maybe it's something along the lines of it's their passion and they didn't realize that they could actually make money for it.

So in the state of Florida, you're allowed to actually grow your own produce and then sell it for cash. Oh, I should be doing that. I think a lot of people should, or you know, here's the thing is that the economy's so different nowadays that people are looking at ways to find. Extra sources of income or they're trying to barter.

So you'll see people that will go, I have sourdough bread, but I need eggs. Do you want to split? I'll give you sourdough bread for eggs. [00:02:00]

Dalia: That was one thing I liked about the COVID pandemic. We did a lot of bartering with our neighbors. Mm-hmm. And I can even remember, I don't

remember what I gave, but I got these huge carrots in return and I was like, this is how it should be all the time.

Kim: Yeah.

Dalia: So where did this idea come from?

Kim: Uh, struggling to find locally grown food on my own. So I actually do have a farm. It's a small farm that, um, I produce, you know, food for my family and for close friends and things like that. But I started looking for things that I didn't grow. So I don't raise chickens.

I don't have eggs, I don't raise chickens. But I was looking for some pastured poultry because one of my family members has a, has a disease that required me to look at some things a little bit differently. And, uh, it was a very difficult. Uh, find, like I couldn't find it. I'd go into social media and you wouldn't find it close by, and so I went, okay, there's gotta be a better way, like the better mousetrap, right?

So. I just started getting frustrated and people, you'd see people go, I want, I'm looking for sourdough bread in this zip code. I'm [00:03:00] looking for eggs in this zip code. I'm looking for somebody who does grass fed beef in this zip code because I can't have corn 'cause I have gout, or I am looking for this.

And I just kept seeing all these people looking for things and I go, there's got to be a way to consolidate all of these farms and these small producers. And provide something to the community. And it also helps the farms and helps the small, the small, local food producers, because if you put money into your community, it gets stronger.

Now, if we're putting money into not only our, our food, because now people are more concerned about what's in our food, it's gonna strengthen our health and our financial communities.

Dalia: Okay, so I live in Riverview in the Brandon area. I wanna be a part of this, especially since you said it's free. So walk me through the process.

Kim: Uh, you go to farm pixie.com, you can sign up as a vendor and a consumer. So you could be either, either one or both. And as a consumer, you're just gonna go on there and you put in your zip code. And you know, if there's certain things like events [00:04:00] at farms, um, and festivals. So like if it's a

taste testing for like mangoes, you can basically go to this mango farm and taste all the different mangoes.

If you are looking for something that's a little bit further north, and you wanna do a fall festival with your family and you wanna do the hayride and those types of things, and the agritourism. So you get to actually see all those things. But you just go on there and you sign up and you can look through anything.

There's, there's about 50 different things to look through, and it basically, if you type in and the directory, it'll give you, uh, right now we have over 800 products on there.

Dalia: Okay. So my friend Anna, she's got like 30 chickens. Mm-hmm. That's too many eggs for her family. Right? How could she unload some of that?

Kim: Okay. As long as she's following the rules of the state of Florida, all she has to do is go on there and say how much she wants to sell her eggs for, and then would people come to her house. However she wants to set it up. So I have made it so that you make the decision. So as a vendor, you get to make the decision whether or not you want to.

Do it for financial gain, you know, and make this a hobby. You know that that is going to be your side [00:05:00] hustle or you can do it for bartering. So if somebody wants to do something like that, and then you can decide do you wanna do it at, you know, someone's location, do you wanna drop off? Do you wanna do delivery?

Do you want to meet somebody somewhere? Do you want them to come to your home? And those are all decisions you have to make. It's very similar to Facebook marketplace.

Dalia: Yeah, that's what I was thinking, like if you bought something on Facebook marketplace, you might say, meet me in the Starbucks parking lot and we'll do the exchange.

Kim: Mm-hmm. Right. And if you wanna go see the farm. That's something that a lot of these farmers and ranchers will let you do because they want you to know that the animals and the area that they're, they're gardening is healthy.

Dalia: That's great. And actually, a few years ago, I'm always looking for interesting things to do with my kids. And I came across an alpaca farm on line and I took my kids there thinking it was gonna be this big public place and it

was somebody's house. Mm-hmm. And it was just a husband and wife, and I was like, oh, this is kind of cool actually.

Kim: Was it in Dade City?

Dalia: No, it was in. It. It was south of St. Petersburg. Okay. Like Palmetto area. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kim: Yeah. There's some really cool stuff around people that don't even know [00:06:00] that there are things like this. Agritourism is very large in Florida, but people don't realize how large it is.

Dalia: Yes. Because you think of things like going to an orange grove in Clermont and picking citrus, but you don't think of your next door neighbor has like a whole farm in the backyard. Yep. That's kind of cool. Okay, so how'd you get into this? Let's go way back. I know you said you had a family member with a health issue. Mm-hmm. But like growing up, where did you live and what kind of foods did you eat?

Kim: Born and raised in Florida, central Florida.

Actually. Pinellas County grew up outside of Dunedin. Uh, could remember smelling the. Minute Maid plant the oranges in Dunedin. I also remember there was a place called Firmenich in Safety Harbor, which they produced all the citrus oils so you could smell the oils. I mean, I grew up outside. I grew up.

Because I didn't have air conditioning in Florida. I grew up outside because it was cooler outside than it was inside. And, um, I would garden, I learned from my neighbor who was a landscaper and how to garden when I was about four years old. And I started [00:07:00] growing beans and had a bounty of beans that my mother would freeze.

And I just, I enjoyed it. And then finding, you know, that we could connect with food in ways that. As a community, you can connect with food. 'cause you can, you can put down your differences and you can connect over food. And everybody wants good, healthy food and they want it to taste good and they wanna know where it kind of comes from.

'cause most people think it comes from the grocery stores.

Dalia: So what do you love about this? I mean, you said this is free mm-hmm. To users. So obviously it's a passion project for you. Mm-hmm. So what about giving people access to local food brings you joy?

Kim: It brings me joy because here's the thing, is that we as people want healthy food and there are people that enjoy growing it, raising it, making it.

I am not a sourdough maker. I will never make sourdough. It requires an another thing for me to keep alive. I am not gonna keep a starter alive to, to bake bread. So I really [00:08:00] appreciate that in people, and I think that people want that around a table. Everybody forgets their differences for food. So I, I just find that that's the joy in giving people opportunities.

And I also like the exotic things that we don't normally get to try. Like ice cream, bananas. I dunno if you, there, they, they taste like vanilla ice cream.

Dalia: I need to experience that.

Kim: Yeah. There's tons of different, like we have 60 different in the state of Florida, different types of mangoes. Like there's an orange creamsicle, mango, there's all these different. Types of mangoes. Yeah. So it's now trying something that's different and that's so much fun. I mean, even with my kids, when we go to any sort of farmer's market or a different grocery store, maybe like a, an Indian grocery store, something like that, and we get to try different produce. It's, it's fun. It feels like a little field trip.

Yeah. And then jackfruit, I mean, that's something that you can grow here. Vanilla. There's a mac nut, uh, farm here. Oh, right. Where's that in Central Florida. I did not know.[00:09:00]

Dalia: How do you ensure quality control?

Kim: So that is the biggest dilemma. Consumers are gonna have to be nosy in question, and if producers don't want to participate, we can take them down. I, I can't necessarily deal with quality control. What I can do is give them the right questions to ask the producers and also make sure that they're following the state regulations or their local regulations.

So right now we're only in Florida. As we [00:10:00] grow, we're gonna be nationwide 'cause we wanna provide this for people all over the United States because when I travel I like to find local food as well. And it's very difficult

unless you know, like the different groups. Inside of social media, like Facebook or something.

And if you don't know where those groups are, you're never going to find them. So what are the right questions to ask? Like let's just say for instance, it's animals. If it's feed, so what kind of feed are you using? And that's the other thing is it'll filter out what kind of feed that different people are using.

So if someone does not wanna have corn in their diet because of dietary restrictions, they can ask specifically for those types of things. Are they doing no antibiotics, no hormones. What other things are they providing? Are they, are they giving them just grass? What kind of grass are they? Are they giving them?

What kind of feed are they giving them? So when you start talking about fruits and vegetables, what kind of fertilizers are you using? Are you using any insecticides or is it non GMO? Is it all of these different elements of that? And then asking them [00:11:00] if they can just see where it's coming from, because I think that's one of the misconceptions as we as.

As my kids grew up, they didn't know hamburger was beef, and when I told my youngest that hamburger was beef, he became a vegetarian of course, and that was not fun. Trying to figure out what to feed him that was healthy for him, that wasn't coming out of a box, because that's what's provided in a grocery store.

Unless you circulate around the edges, you're not going to. Get all the healthier things. In fact, sometimes the healthier things are actually in the frozen food section, like, because it's flash frozen, the vegetables, um, versus the lettuce that's been sitting on the, the shelves for, you know, four days.

Because logistically it's been driving for three weeks to get here. I know for a fact that when I started gardening at my farm, I, I built, you know, some raised beds and I started gardening and I wanted to see what would work and what wouldn't work and, you know, what kind of pests I would have to deal with.

I started with lettuce [00:12:00] and 'cause our family eats tons of lettuce, I would pick bags of lettuce and it would stay fresh in my, in my refrigerator for three weeks because it's not being transported across the United States.

Dalia: Wow. And you mentioned all the health benefits. Mm-hmm. And then there's that intangible sort of stress reliever mm-hmm.

That is like getting dirt under your fingernails and the pride in, in growing something. Yeah. And if, and if we don't have time to do that, it's great because we have farm pixie that can, you know, steer us to our neighbors. Maybe we grow one thing, they grow one thing and we all kinda have that interdependence, which is really cool.

Kim: Yeah. That's it. That's really what it is. It's, it's, it's really building the community around food and locally grown or locally made. Like there's a woman that I, I love her soap. She has goat milk soap, and, um, she ran out of it and I said, listen, when you, I want 10 bars so I never run out again. But you know, there's things like [00:13:00] that that we're looking for.

You know, it's also the Talla, which is very popular now. The beef tallow.

Dalia: Yeah. I keep seeing these billboards for like beef tallow french fries.

Kim: Yeah. I mean, yeah. Yeah. Because the steak and Shake and Chick-fil-A and they're fighting back and forth. Yes. Uh, yes, yes. Absolutely. But you know, all of these different things that we are going back to, this is tallow, is what they used hundreds of years ago.

And you know, we go back to the fifties and sixties. Was when the grocery stores really became popular and people started going to grocery stores, where before that it was always farms. So now we're into the farm, back to the farms agritourism. I mean, I love the fact that a lot of these farms now, there's one in Brooksville that they are now doing like concerts and they'll bring in like a nineties country music singer and you can bring your chair and you pay your ticket and you park yourself right there and you get to listen to, you know.

People singing in a farm.

Dalia: Is it the Olive Grove?

Kim: No, it's actually called Whitehead Farms.

Dalia: Ooh, I love that. There [00:14:00] are multiple farms doing concerts.

Kim: Oh yeah. There's tons of 'em.

Dalia: How fun is that?

Kim: There's one up in um, Oxford, Florida called Brown and Brown. Oh my gosh. They have a little country store and they do a huge fall festival and they do do concerts, but I'm, listen, I love me, some junk in the trunk up there.

They have something where everybody comes and they have between three and 500 vendors and they set up all their wares. It's like a huge garage sale, size vintage stuff. And man, if I don't leave there with a truckload of stuff from myself, that's my dream. Oh man, I love this. I love, okay, Florida is like the gift that keeps on giving because on the surface you have like your theme parks and those kind of places to visit, but then under the surface you have this whole culture of farms and a agritourism and just different places to visit.

Dalia: It's fun. I mean, you've named probably 10 places to go explore just in the couple minutes we've been chatting. So for the listener, I would love for you to just pick out one. [00:15:00] You know, you're listening right now. You pick out one thing that you want to explore or one product that you wanna go and either grow or, you know, seek out on Farm Pixie.

I just think that's so cool.

Kim: And permaculture. And that's the other thing is that we're adding the events part. So you'll have classes so people can go learn how to do sourdough bread. If they choose to, they can go do goat yoga. 'cause they'll have, find a place that they, you know, you can go on social media and type in goat yoga and you'll find something.

But there's a lot of other classes out there like learning how to make your own skincare, learning how to can your own food, how to, people want to know these types of things. They're learning. They want to get back to the basics of not having to buy a product. Yes. And it's, it's the pride that you have when you make it and you share it with your family.

Like Yes, I remember you talking about making your own vanilla. Mm-hmm. I made that for everybody. Um, for Christmas as well.

Dalia: Yeah. I have some in my closet right now. I'll shake it up once a week. Yep. And then in December I'm ready to give it out as holiday gifts. And the thing I have to remind myself is [00:16:00] the big corporations are never going to suggest a solution that doesn't involve buying something from them.

Kim: Correct.

Dalia: They're never gonna say, Hey Kim, you have everything you need at home. Or, you know what, in your neighborhood there's everything you need. You don't have to buy anything from us. 'cause that doesn't make them any money. Correct. Yeah. So we just have to keep reminding ourselves and listen, I do plenty of shopping at the big box.

Kim: We all do listen, we all do. We all do. There's no, but you know, start small.

Dalia: Okay, so for someone listening who thinks, this is great, but I'm somebody who gets my beef, tallow fries from a fast food restaurant. I don't even have time to like microwave something. How can I start small?

Kim: Easy. Just go on to farm pixie.com and then, and type in your zip code and find something that's local.

You might find that, you know, if you're having autoimmune problems or if you're having things like that, that you are concerned about, or maybe if it's your children or maybe it's your spouse or, or a significant other, you can kind of go through and say, okay, let's eliminate some of these things out of our [00:17:00] diet.

And how does, how do these foods help us? How do these foods harm us? It's. It's very simple. Plus there's a lot of people out there now that are willing to. Uh, do like a farm to table dinner for you. So if you don't have the time, they will provide those types of things and, and more in central Florida than in the Tampa market.

But there are a few out there in central Florida. I don't know if they're gearing towards more of, um, Orlando, but that's, it's out that direction. Um, that is actually our goal with our farm, is we wanna do farm to table dinners.

Dalia: Oh, I love that.

Kim: To provide for the local farms. And this is the other thing that people don't realize is that everybody. Wants to keep Florida to Florida, like old Florida. It's never gonna be old Florida. But once you take away pasture and you take away farmland and you build upon it, you're never going to get it back. And if you are buying direct from the farms, then you are keeping Florida [00:18:00] more rural and old. So you're having to put money back into your community if you are, I wouldn't say against development, 'cause development's gonna happen regardless.

If you want to keep food local, you need to buy direct from your farmers because they're going to get more of the, the capital share of financial means to do that, and then they'll stay in business. So they won't sell to the developer.

Dalia: Yeah. You're voting with your dollar. Mm-hmm. I love that. I love this idea and the fact that it's free, so thank you.

Kim: Oh, you're welcome.

Dalia: Amazing. This was great.

Kim: Thank you for having me. Thank you.

Kim Kenney is the founder of Farm Pixie. She shared a couple of her favorite farm fresh recipes with us, including slow cooker coq au vin, roasted Seminole pumpkin, and Roselle pumpkin bread and baked Seminole pumpkin crumble. Mm.

Those all sound so cozy and Florida fall. You'll find them all on our website. The Zest podcast.com. [00:19:00] I'm Dalia Colon. I produce The Zest with Andrew Lucas and Alexandria Ebron. The Zest is a production of WUSF, copyright 2025, part of the NPR network.