



Merchant spotlight

Savannah Mitchell

Sunday Morning Coffee Company founder, Savannah Mitchell, makes the case for why coffee lovers should take their coffee Black (owned).



When Savannah Mitchell left for college on a train to Washington, D.C., she had never left her family before. Having grown up in a small community in upstate New York, she was curious about life outside her town.

Howard University, a prestigious historically Black research university, would completely open up Savannah's world. She was surrounded by unmatched Black excellence in D.C. "For the first time in my life, I was around all Black businesses and I saw Black people in stately homes with manicured lawns," says Savannah. "There was so much greatness there that I had never seen before. I told my mom and dad that I was never returning home."

It was also where she would find her calling in hospitality. Her first college job was as an intern at the university's hotel, called the Howard Inn, serving gourmet coffee to the president and the deans of Howard University. This experience would ultimately help pave her life's path.

"I began to see the coffee ritual as a marker of culture and class," Savannah says, and coffee became more than just a beverage to her. In fact, it turned into a life-long passion.



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I'm providing my community with opportunities to become great. And I do that with coffee.

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For the next 25 years, she would perfect her palette, traveling to regions in South America and the Caribbean to sample their coffee.



These coffees are sourced from Columbia and Ethiopia, where the soil is rich and dynamic and yields outstanding coffee beans.

Turning coffee into an ecommerce business

Despite expanding her coffee expertise during that period, Savannah didn't turn her passion into a business until much later. That opportunity would come in the spring of 2020 when she was laid off from her government job due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Savannah exited the 9-5 life, and Sunday Morning Coffee Company was born later that year.

"I felt like my life had been waiting on me to make this pivot," she reflects. "For years, this was something that had been in my spirit to fulfill. I had the entrepreneurial vision, and now it was time to live it."

Today, Savannah is using Buy with Prime to help grow her ecommerce coffee business by offering Prime members fast, free delivery, a seamless checkout experience, and easy returns. Additionally, being able to tap into the trust of Prime using the Buy with Prime badge on her site has helped Savannah establish trust with her customers, a common challenge when building a new ecommerce brand.

"[When I heard that I could] get Prime members on my website and keep them coming back, it was an immediate 'yes' for me," she says. "When shoppers see that Prime smile logo and the Buy with Prime badge, they know the experience that they're going to get. There's less hesitation and doubt. For a small business, it's an important innovation."

Cultivating a passion for Sundays and self-care

Savannah chose the name Sunday Morning Coffee Company because of what Sunday mornings have always represented to her.

"On a Sunday morning, everything in life just feels easy. I'm able to hit pause and just appreciate life," she explains. "That's the power of a Sunday Morning coffee to me. It returns you to yourself."

Although coffee is often seen as a way to speed up, Sunday Morning Coffee Company invites coffee lovers to slow down and take a moment for themselves with each sip. Savannah sees coffee as a form of self-care, a way to practice mindfulness. Two of her bestselling blends, Tiah Maria, a full-bodied medium-dark roast and 1967, an organic espresso blend, are part of her daily routine.

Reclaiming the forgotten legacy of Black coffee culture

The historical lines that can be drawn between the Black community and coffee are sharp and distinct. According to the National Coffee



Association, coffee grown around the world today has origins going back hundreds of years to the ancient coffee forests in the highlands of Ethiopia, where goat herders discovered that berries from a certain tree helped them stay awake.

The first coffees that would make it to Europe and then North America were harvested by African slaves. Hundreds of years later, coffee is a multibillion-dollar industry, and coffee-drinking has become an indelible part of the social fabric of countries around the world.

The history of coffee is Black history. Despite this legacy, Black people are underrepresented as sellers of coffee and have the lowest rates of coffee consumption demographically, according to the National Coffee Data Trends Study. Savannah seeks to change that. On her ecommerce site, she has a Coffee 101 educational video where she teaches six different brewing methods, from French press to Chemex pour-over, for those who are new to coffee.

"I can't tell you how many Black and Brown people I've met who have never tried coffee—coffee isn't marketed to us," she says. "There are few Black-owned coffee companies and even fewer Black women-owned ones."

Breaking down barriers for Black coffee entrepreneurs

As one of very few Black women in the industry, Savannah's mission with Sunday Morning Coffee Company is twofold: to make the coffee-drinking culture more accessible to all people, and to end the gatekeeping that blocks Black professionals from entering the space.

"There's a disparity in opportunity. Black businesses are undercapitalized and underfunded," says Savannah, who had to

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pull from her retirement savings to launch Sunday Morning Coffee Company. "Even if you have a strong business plan, are you able to endure the time it takes to start seeing results? Black businesses often don't have the cushion to wait for six or 12 months to make a profit. That's why many of them don't survive."

For other Black-owned businesses that are also encountering the challenges that she has faced—and continues to face—her advice is for them to know the vision, collaborate with others and remain steadfast through ups and downs.

She says, "Stay true to the vision. No matter how many times you hear 'no,' remember that each one gets you closer to the 'yes' that will change everything. My personal approach is '3D,' which stands for discipline, determination, and dedication."

Savannah has plans to get her products in Target this year and open her first brick-and-mortar in the D.C. area. Her 10-year goal is to open a branded chain of Sunday Morning Coffee Company bed and breakfasts that feature coffeehouses inside. She sees her coffee company as the first step to a hospitality empire. "If the dream doesn't scare you, it's not big enough," she proclaims.

Savannah feels blessed to live life as a Black woman entrepreneur. "Black businesses give Black communities the power to write their own narratives," she says. "I love providing my community with opportunities to become great, and I love being able to do that with coffee."



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find a new
favorite roast!