

# SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE RIDES A BOLD GROWTH WAVE

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Like a lot of children, Savannah Mitchell staged elaborate coffee and tea parties for her dolls and siblings.

Imaginary play, it turned out, was a valuable training ground. She's now the owner and CEO of Sunday Morning Coffee Company in Anne Arundel County, a company that's blazing inroads into corporate settings throughout the United States and garnering legions of loyal fans.

Even more remarkable is how quickly the business took off, but then again, Mitchell was training for it her whole life. She recalls using her first allowance to purchase a monthly Gevalia coffee subscription, and serving coffee to Howard University's president and deans on fine silver as a Hospitality Management program intern at the University's hotel.

She later established her own catering company and spent countless hours experimenting with her own coffee blends and recipes, just for fun.

"I spent 20 years working for Maryland state government," she said. "When my job was abolished in 2020 at the onset of the pandemic I was thankful. I realized this was my destiny."

That same day, Mitchell got her business license and applied for certification as a Woman-owned Business. The company's name came to her a day later.

"Sunday morning is a moment in time that's filled with grace," she said. "It's a moment you want to replicate every time you drink a cup of coffee and remind yourself that you are valuable and worthy and life is good."

## Karma

Good things began to happen swiftly for Mitchell, starting with her enrollment in Amazon's Black Business Accelerator program.



Savannah Mitchell parlayed a lifelong fascination with coffee and hospitality into a business that's developed a growing devoted fan base. (TBM / George Berkheimer)

"They gave us ongoing weekly training and flew us to Seattle to learn how to become an Amazon Merchant," she said.

That led to a partnership with Wegmans and helped leverage certification through the Women's Business Enterprise National Council, which helps Fortune 500 companies connect and do business with women-owned diverse companies.

The day before Mitchell risked her dwindling funds to attend a Women's Business Enterprise National Council conference, Capital One invited her to set up an exhibit in their booth.

"There was no way I could afford my own booth," she said. "We drove business to that corner and got noticed by Staples, which was searching for a woman-owned diverse coffee supplier."

The four months of aggravation to become a Staples supplier paid dividends with a follow-on preferred provider contract with Williams-Sonoma, which now supplies all of its national employees with Sunday Morning's coffee, but karma didn't end there.

"The Ladies Professional Golf Association contacted Women's Business Enterprise National Council because they didn't have any black-owned businesses under contract and also needed coffee," Mitchell said.

Women's Business Enterprise National Council made the introduction, and after a personal interview and presentation in New Jersey, Sunday Morning landed the contract in February 2023.

"Being at a professional sporting event gave us television and media exposure and we had a hospitality suite," Mitchell said. "It was an amazing experience that opened the door to potentially working with other PGA tournaments that have contacted us."

## Humane trade

Now entering its third year, Sunday Morning Coffee employs eight and works with a contracted commercial roaster in Jessup.

"We're fortunate because they're local and can roast up to 10,000 pounds a day for us," Mitchell said. "Capacity and a quick turnaround time are differentiators when you're

playing with big corporations like Staples and Williams-Sonoma."

Sunday Morning Coffee sources its beans from cooperatives and builds relationships with generational family-owned farms, which helps maintain the humanity of the trade.

Coffee bean farming is laborious, occurring in regions with rough terrain and challenging climates.

"The farmers we work with are proud and make their livelihoods from coffee, so we want to make sure wages are fair and that we're not undercutting anyone," Mitchell said. "That goes hand in hand with ensuring a certain level of quality in the coffee we buy, and makes our products even better because you're drinking a responsible cup of coffee."

Sunday Morning Coffee sells 14 customized blends that Mitchell has developed after traveling the world to sample coffees and pin down profiles that will appeal to a plethora of palates.

## Big scary dream

Building on the success of the LPGA partnership, Sunday Morning Coffee is now looking to develop relationships with other professional sports franchises, including men's and women's professional tennis, the NFL, and the NBA.

"We're starting with the corporate route, but we'd also like to enter the vending arena for fans," she said.

Last year the company generated \$275,000 in sales, and is on track to hit \$500,000 this year and top \$1 million by the end of 2024.

Domestic orders come from places like Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, and other areas where Sunday Morning Coffee has never marketed thanks to Staples exposing its corporate vendors to the brand, who then recommend it to family and friends.

"Inexplicably, we even have a small but loyal fan base in Switzerland," Mitchell said.

Expansion is in the works, with storefronts coming soon to Suitland, Columbia, Annapolis, and even Houston, Texas, and the potential for global expansion, starting with either Canada or Mexico.

"I'm a big believer that the dream has to be so big that it scares you," Mitchell said. "This has definitely scared me, but I have the ability to move forward in the fear."