

Aromas Coffeehouse & Bliss Bakery

Serving Customers 'A Piece of Happiness'

What's in a name? Five years ago, when Autumn Pruitt was considering names for her bakery at 1031 Jones St. in Omaha's Old Market, she decided to keep things simple.

"We are trying to offer our customers a piece of happiness," Pruitt explained. "It's amazing how a delicious cup of coffee and a made-from-scratch cupcake can brighten your day. It's a simple pleasure and the name Bliss really captures that in one small word."

Reflecting on her early days of ownership, Pruitt cited the pride she felt as an Omaha native to be part of the downtown business community. "While driving with my sister into work one morning at 4 a.m. I remember seeing the downtown skyline and thinking for the first time that I own a piece of that—I have a key to a building in the Old Market," she explained.



Initially, Bliss Bakery was known for its cupcakes, which led Pruitt to an appearance on the Food Network's "Cupcake Wars."

At first, Pruitt relied heavily on her parents, husband, close family members, and friends who contributed countless hours outside their full-time jobs to help in the kitchen. "My husband would work all day long as a worship arts pastor with a local church, then come down to the bakery and wash dishes and mop the floors," she recalled.

The fledgling coffeehouse and bakery gained national notoriety a few months after opening when Pruitt was invited to submit an audition tape to the Food Network's "Cupcake Wars." That led to her appearance as a contestant on the syndicated TV show produced in Los Angeles.

"We didn't win, but it was a valuable life lesson about what can come from trying something," Pruitt shared. "It was an opportunity to get our name out in the Omaha area and to meet customers who had never heard of us before. And whenever the show appears in a rerun, we see a new wave of customers come in."

The growing popularity of the coffeehouse and bakery has enabled Pruitt to increase her staff to 32 full-time and part-time employees and managers.

"I don't think I can say strongly enough how remarkable our staff is," Pruitt acknowledged. "Our team is made up of people who take pride in what they do, who have passion for the product, and a real vision for what we are doing in the community."

Two years ago, Pruitt remodeled the Old Market location and opened



Specialty coffee, gourmet cupcakes, and a growing menu of made-from-scratch baked goods and healthy lunch fare are part of Pruitt's recipe for success at Aromas Coffeehouse and Bliss Old Market Bakery.

a second coffeehouse in the resurgent Benson business district. Earlier this year, she launched the Hardy Coffee Co., a coffee roasting company with retail distribution, and added a selection of healthy lunch items to the bakery's menu. Later this year, a third coffeehouse location will be part of a new food hall opening at the Westroads Mall in Flagship Commons.

Pruitt said First National Bank has been a valuable partner throughout the company's recent expansion. She initiated a business banking relationship with First National after another bank failed to meet her own expectations for customer service.

"We have been very pleased with our relationship with First National," Pruitt noted. "They act like a neighborhood bank even though they're a much larger organization."

Describing the past five years as "a bit of a blur," Pruitt has maintained her customer focus with each new enterprise.

"We have an incredible customer base," Pruitt emphasized. "Our regular customers are what keep our doors open. We are committed to the quality experience that our customers have come to expect and are eager to win over new folks through that process."

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