

Get to Know Candace Nelson of Sprinkles

Written by Victoria Fouts

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Candace Nelson, founder of Sprinkles Cupcakes, was recently in town to launch her latest delicious creations and the new Sprinkles ATM. She sat down with Arizona Foothills Magazine to share what's coming to Scottsdale.

AFM: What inspired you to turn your love of baking cupcakes into such a successful business?

CN: I always grew up baking with my mom, and I really loved baking classic American desserts. Chocolate chip cookies, brownies, cheesecakes, cupcakes and that was something I did because I grew up overseas and you couldn't always get those things in local stores because I grew up in Indonesia and I had to make them myself if I wanted to eat them. So that was something I did all throughout my childhood and then I rediscovered it again after a career, small stint, in investment banking. I worked for a dot. com, I ended up going to pastry school and realized that I wanted to dedicate my life to this. I had no idea whether or not I would be able to make a living doing it, but my husband was supportive and he said "let's give it a go" and so I just started working out of my kitchen and it grew from there.

AFM: You started your business in Beverly Hills. Are there any differences (clientele, location, etc.) you had to account for when the bakery in Scottsdale was created?

CN: Well, all of our customers are important no matter where we open. It just so happens that when we opened in Beverly Hills we had a lot of celebrities that come into our store, but the celebrities have to wait in line just like everybody else. It is very democratic, and we try to provide the best customer service to everyone. But in terms of differences between the locations, there are baking differences based on the climate. When we came to Scottsdale, I had to do a little bit of adjustment of the recipes because it is so dry and we had to make sure there was enough moisture in the cupcakes. We also developed these large Ziploc bags which we never had before. That was just when we got to Scottsdale so when people got their cupcakes they could zip in the moisture and, if it sat on their shelf for a few hours or overnight, they wouldn't turn rock hard like what happens when you buy a loaf of bread and don't protect it. So there are differences like that, but in terms of the clientele, all of our clientele is important.

AFM: This fall you plan on bringing the Cupcake ATM to Arizona. Can you tell us more about that?

CN: We are going to bring a single Cupcake ATM, and it will be connected to our store here. It will be the fourth Cupcake ATM. The first was in Beverly Hills, then we went to Chicago and I think Dallas will be open prior to getting open here. It's a really special unique thing; we developed the first ever Cupcake ATM and it's been a big hit in Beverly Hills where we opened it over a year ago. You get a freshly baked cupcake by swiping your card anytime, day or night, 24 hours a day. We have lines in Beverly Hills early in the morning, so people getting out of clubs or a late party with the munchies can now come to Sprinkles.

AFM: How do you keep them fresh?

CN: The ATMs open on to our bakery so bakery workers can very easily stock. The ATM holds up to 600 cupcakes but we never stock it that full because we are trying to keep it refreshed. There are basically only a few hours every day that they are in our store because we clean, prepare, and lock up for the next morning and the first workers get here at 3 or 4 in the morning, so there are only a few hours someone isn't there so the cupcakes are always really fresh and that's why it's very important that the ATM is connected to our store.



AFM: Do you have anything new coming soon for Sprinkles fans?

CN: We opened an ice cream store in Beverly Hills a year ago. We are scouting a location for an ice cream store here in Scottsdale. We

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haven't quite found it yet or nailed it down so we don't have an announcement to make quite yet but we are definitely planning to bring the ice cream here because it's such a perfect market, a perfect climate. We have two; we just opened one in Newport Beach after the success of Beverly Hills it's been doing great. Beautiful homemade ice cream, we make it all ourselves, the best chocolate, vanilla, we make all of our own chocolate chips... It's really special, old school American ice cream. It's not gelato or frozen yogurt; it's dense and creamy and gooey and really delicious.

AFM: You are about to start filming for the ninth season of "Cupcake Wars". What's it like on the show?

CN: Yes, season 9 begins in a couple weeks so we will be filming that. We've done over 100 shows so far so it's been pretty amazing to see the success of that show. It airs all over the world, I mean it's shown in Brazil and Singapore, so the popularity of the cupcake has grown worldwide.

AFM: Is there anything else you would like to share?

CN: Well, we launched our new sugar- free red velvet cupcake and we have a gluten- free and a vegan red velvet, so this is sort of the last thing we didn't have for people with restricted diets. So, in response to customers asking for it, we are now launching it and hopefully people will like it in time for summer. We also have a lemon meringue cupcake coming out this summer which will be a unique cupcake for us because of it has lemon curd in the center, and we haven't done curds before. It has a toasted marshmallow top and a sweet graham cracker crust.



AFM: Will you be trying to offer other cupcake flavors for those with dietary restrictions as well?

CN: Well, we will see how it goes and how popular it is. We figure that our main, core business is standard, more traditional cupcakes but we wanted to have at least one offering for people who couldn't really indulge alongside their friends. People with Celiac or aren't eating animal products or are diabetic and we wanted to do that. But if we are going to do that then we want it to be in our most popular flavor; not to say that we won't come out with other flavors in vegan, gluten and sugar- free, but I don't have a time frame on that right now.

AFM: What is the most popular cupcake?

CN: Red velvet is definitely our most popular cupcake; it doesn't matter what store, it doesn't matter where we are, it is always our number one seller.

AFM: What is your favorite cupcake?

CN: Dark chocolate. I like dark chocolate without the sprinkles because I feel that sometimes the sprinkles get in the way of the texture, that creamy frosting. Whenever I order dark chocolate it's without sprinkles but you can get it either way.