

LET'S GET TAKEOUT

Growing Grace: Seattle-inspired cafe expands to 4 locations in less than 2 years

By Victoria Davis, Special to the Cap Times | Dec 20, 2020



Co-owner Nicki Bloomer and chef Claudia Falcon pose for a portrait outside of Grace Coffee in Sun Prairie.

RUTHIE HAUGE



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While many restaurants have closed their doors either temporarily or permanently due to the ongoing pandemic, specialty coffee shop Grace Coffee Company has expanded out of Madison to two new locations: Sun Prairie and Middleton.

“A lot of people have lost their jobs this year, so we’re grateful to be able to employ people and give them a steady income,” said Carlos Falcon, barista and owner of Grace Coffee. “We have close to 100 employees at this point and they are all like family.”

Falcon **started Grace Coffee in May 2019** after moving to Madison from Seattle. At 417 State St., Grace drew customers with peanut butter and Nutella acai bowls (\$9.95), bacon breakfast wraps (\$10.95), Seattle-style coffee from Onyx Coffee Labs and, of course, his friendly Bernese mountain dog Pablo.

The plan for Grace began with the idea of a single shop, but Falcon now has four cafes, three of which opened in the last year. The expansion wasn’t exactly planned, Falcon said.

“Real estate developers who were regular customers started noticing what we do and would tell us they had a building open and asked if we’d be interested in opening a shop. It's been a little crazy, but exciting at the same time.”

The two locations in Middleton and Sun Prairie, as well as Grace’s second location on 1222 E. Washington Ave, all include full-service kitchens. That allowed the café to expand its menu to breakfast and lunch options, like breakfast tacos (\$8.95) and French toast (\$10.95), burgers (\$12.95) and steak and onion sandwiches (\$11.95).

All Grace locations offer sit-down service at 25% capacity as well as take-out, with the option to order online.

Co-owner Nicki Bloomer said people told them they were “nuts” to open during the pandemic, “but everything has been going well since day one, we are so lucky to be able to say that.”

Carlos Falcon’s parents, Carlos and Louisa Falcon, and his aunt Maria, all originally from Peru, moved to Madison to join Falcon’s Grace family as cooks after their own restaurant in Seattle closed due to COVID.



Grace Coffee opened in the former space that once housed Helbach's Coffee in Middleton.

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“I wouldn't be able to do this without them,” the younger Carlos Falcon said. “Because of their help and support we're able to make sure that all the quality is up to par for what we want to sell.”

Falcon's sister Claudia Falcon also joined as a pastry chef when Grace opened the location on East Wash. Early in the pandemic, Bloomer and Claudia Falcon developed a “second bake program” where people could take their pre-shaped croissants home and bake them themselves. They also created Weekend Pastry Care Packages customers could order through the website, filled with Claudia's French-style scones and cookies.

“It was a way for us to say, to the people who were staying at home, we're there with you,” said Claudia. She studied at Le Cordon Bleu in Peru and interned in Paris for three months to learn patisserie.

In addition to chocolate espresso scones (\$4.75) and ham and cheese croissants (\$4.75), Claudia has worked with Bloomer to develop creative new treats for the holiday season, such as Tiramisu Buche de Noel in the form of yule log cakes (\$38),



Grace Coffee has a new location near Cabela's in Sun Prairie.

RUTHIE HAUGE

macarons in flavors like candy cane and gingerbread (\$21.95 for 15), cinnamon rolls in the shape of Christmas trees (\$17.50) and hot chocolate bombs, of which Grace has already sold 1,000.

“Food has always been part of my family,” said Claudia. “Growing up, it's always been part of me too. It's long hours and a lot of production, but I love coming up with new ideas every week to keep our customers coming back.”

Both Claudia and Carlos went to college for business but found their callings in the food and service industries. Falcon discovered a love for coffee while working at a Vietnamese restaurant in Seattle when he was 17. Bloomer as well left a career in kinesiology to pursue the restaurant and bar business.

All three have come together at Grace, each motivated by a desire to engage their community and create a safe, familial sanctuary for whoever walks through their doors.





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“We're very tight-knit, and that's how we are with our customers and the community too,” said Bloomer. “The regulars that we see on the daily, I wouldn't even consider them customers anymore. They're more like friends.”

Grace shows no signs of slowing down. Carlos Falcon has “big plans” for 2021, with plans to open another Grace Coffee on University Avenue and an 11,000 square foot Grace Restaurant in Waunakee. The team is currently searching for a space to roast their own coffee.



Through all the planning, Carlos says the best part of Grace has been the opportunity to grow with the family he's built.

“This is not just me, and it's never going to be just me,” Carlos Falcon said. “If I didn't have my management, Nikki, my parents, sister and every single one of the employees that we have, it wouldn't work out. We would not be where we are now. Having all these amazing people to be a part of this, it's been the best thing.”

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Grace Coffee Co.

gracecoffeewi.com

State Street

417 State St., (608) 286-1560

HOURS

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Saturday-Sunday, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.

East Washington

1222 E. Washington Ave., (608) 298-7464

HOURS

Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Saturday-Sunday, 8 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Sun Prairie

1261 Cabela Drive, Sun Prairie, (608) 318-5328

HOURS

Monday-Friday, 6 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Saturday-Sunday, 7 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Middleton

1824 Parmeter St., Middleton, (425) 625-7961

HOURS

Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Saturday-Sunday, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

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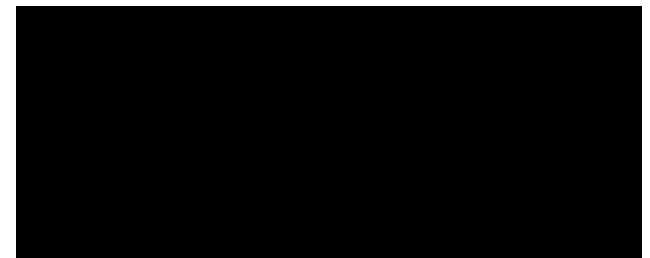
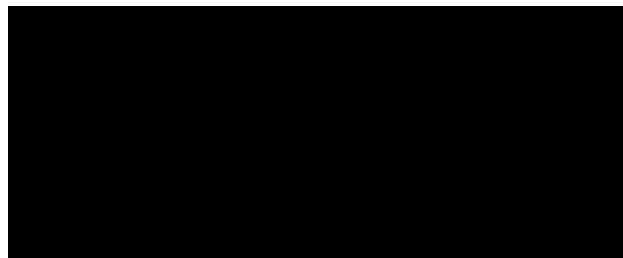
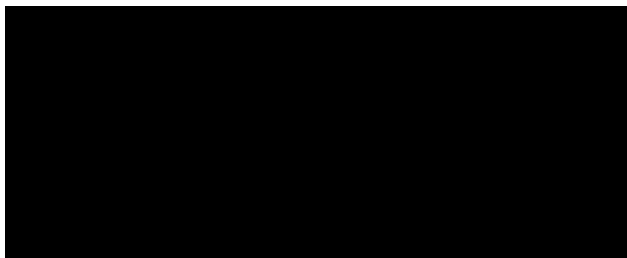
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