



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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News Release

Silver Bridge Coffee grows

Bidwell, Ohio – Lorraine Walker is the owner and operator of the Silver Bridge Coffee Company, a small-batch, specialty coffee roaster in Bidwell, Ohio. Silver Bridge imports coffee from all over the world and roasts it to perfection.

Lorraine describes how her business began, “I had invested 20 years raising my five children; and when my oldest child left for college and my youngest started kindergarten, I decided I needed a job. We began to brainstorm about what I should do. As we began to brainstorm, the idea to open a small-batch coffee roasting facility surfaced. My husband and I had begun roasting coffee as a hobby in a popcorn popper in our kitchen. We loved the taste and aroma of coffee freshly roasted. We had been distributing small amounts of coffee to family and friends as gifts.” It was one of those friends who suggested Walker consider roasting coffee as a business.



“We didn’t just open our doors the next day though.” Lorraine continues. “I took a year to study the coffee industry. We joined the Specialty Coffee Association of America, and I took several training classes. I read everything I could about coffee.” While studying the coffee roasting process, Walker began working with Ohio State University South Centers’ business consultants on a business plan and acquiring the proper permits and certifications from the Ohio Department of Agriculture to allow her to roast in a small facility adjacent to her home.



“I believe that’s what it takes to have a business, especially in this economy,” said Walker. “You have to be willing to go that extra mile.” One of the main differences between Silver Bridge Coffee and other coffees is its freshness. Instead of an expiration date on the back of the package, there is a roasted-on date, and Silver Bridge Coffee is roasted to order. “We’re not warehousing anything. It’s not sitting roasted,” said Walker. “It goes directly from here to a store.”

Walker opened the Silver Bridge Coffee Company in August 2008. In 2009, Walker began participating in farmers markets. Lorraine said, “We could never have imagined how farmers markets would benefit our company. We made initial contacts with many of our wholesale accounts at the market. We have built a loyal customer base.” The company experienced 70% growth in 2010 and 2011. In 2013, the Silver Bridge Coffee Company added a new product to

their extensive list of quality products. They started producing single-serve coffee pods called Silver Bridge Singles. Lorraine is currently focusing on wholesale and continues to grow. Lorraine shares, "We just received approval for our products to be in all the Whole Foods stores in the Mid-Atlantic Region, which is 44 stores (pending individual store approval). It's taking our product out of state from Maryland all the way down to Kentucky."

Lorraine just returned from Seattle, Washington, where she placed in the top six in the 2014 Roaster's Choice Championship Competition a national event sponsored by the Specialty Coffee Association.

Silver Bridge Coffee Company's success is a result of hard work; and according to Lorraine Walker, some help along the way from her family, friends, and Ohio State University (OSU) South Centers.



Most recently, OSU South Centers' Mike Rowe with the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, visited to observe our production processes. According to Lorraine, "Mike gave us numerous suggestions on how our process could be more efficient. It was beneficial. It took us a little time to implement some of Mike's suggestions, and there are still more waiting for a cost-effective time to make the change, but it was helpful. Mike was really sensitive about finding things we could do to be more efficient without necessarily costing a lot more money. Some people might think they don't want to bring someone like Mike in to their business because they don't have the finances to buy a lot of new stuff. I felt like he was really good about understanding that we are a small business and not going to go out and replace all our stuff. Much of his advice involved moving items around to make our workspace more efficient."



Walker's resolve for ultimate freshness lead her to her latest equipment addition a new pink sample roaster. Lorraine describes the addition, "We probably have the only hot pink roaster in the U.S. We are pretty proud of it. The purpose of the sample roaster is to allow us to do small batches of really high-end coffee. It also helps us do sample batches from new importers before we commit to large contracts."

Silver Bridge Coffee Company offers whole or ground beans with a wonderful selection of Espresso, signature blends, single origin coffee, rich gourmet flavored coffee, Fair Trade coffee, water processed, and decaffeinated coffee. They also offer a line of single-serve pods.

Coffee is available to retail customers online at www.silverbridgecoffee.com. Silver Bridge Coffee also sells coffee wholesale to grocery stores, specialty stores, restaurants and cafés. For more information, call 740-709-1610 or e-mail Lorraine at silverbridgecoffee@gmail.com.

For more information regarding no-cost confidential business counseling from Ohio State University South Centers Manufacturing Extension Partnership, contact Joy Bauman at 740-289-2071 x111 or email bauman.67@osu.edu.

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