



Tamara Turner produces Bundt cakes, cake pops and other treats at her Chicago facility.

sweet dreams

A Chicagoan's gourmet wholesale dessert business creates employment opportunities for single mothers.

IN 2017, as Tamara Turner recovered from surgery, she sent a question into the darkness of early morning: “What am I supposed to be doing with my life?” Turner had a psychology degree and an MBA, but she felt stuck working at a barbecue restaurant and trying to make ends meet as a single mom of four. That morning, however, something changed. She heard a voice, clearly, and it said, “Do the cakes first.” Armed with determination and not much else, Turner launched Silver Spoon Desserts, a wholesale bakery, the following week. Today, Turner and her

team of strivers in Chicago—including fellow single mothers—provide frosting-topped Bundt cakes for major corporate clients across the country. *Interview with Kelsey Schagemann.*

KS Why Bundt cakes? And what made you go the business-to-business route, as opposed to a brick-and-mortar bakery?

TI It’s a family recipe, so I’ve always baked these cakes. I gave them out as gifts, and people loved them. They’re damn good cakes! There are no artificial colors, flavors or preservatives. I knew I could sell them,

but I didn’t have the financial resources for a store. I just had my home kitchen.

KS You’ve been working hard on your business for five years. What was the biggest turning point?

TI Getting a contract with American Airlines. I first talked to them in 2017, but I wasn’t ready. When they came back in 2021, I had a shared kitchen, employees and regular clients, such as 1-800-Flowers. American Airlines told me to send them some cakes to try. Little did they know, I wasn’t going to put my cakes in the mail. I got on a plane to Dallas and hand-delivered my samples.

KS I’ll bet they were impressed! Were you intimidated by how many cakes the airline needed each month?

TI I told myself, “We’ll figure it out.” I don’t know that I can’t do something. Even prior to them saying I had the contract, I acted as if it was happening. I signed the lease on a 16,000-square-foot facility. I had to believe, and I had to take action. Now Silver Spoon has 20 people doing about 80,000 Bundt cakes each week for American Airlines.

KS What’s the story behind the name?

TI These little cakes make you feel privileged and special when you eat them. I wanted to transform the silver spoon from a symbol of privilege to one of inspiration, prosperity and freedom for all. Look, I didn’t even have a plastic spoon. I was just a single mother living for my kids. It got pretty dark. But now I’m at the point where I realize life is good, in spite of everything.

KS How else does this philosophy play out in your business?

TI I have single mothers on staff, and I pay them greater than the minimum wage. I know single mothers are often forgotten or not looked at favorably. How are they going to be able to change their lives on minimum wage? You need to offer a living wage and also train them so they can continue to move up. My kids are older now, but I struggled immensely earlier on. I don’t want anybody else to have to do that if I have anything to do with it. I’m bringing people with me to the top.