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The Newest Business near Seattle U's Campus: Boon Boona Coffee

Matt Price, Staff Reporter

Boon Boona Coffee is the newest coffee shop to open near Seattle University's campus. Located at the corner of 12th and James Street, underneath the Douglas Apartments, the Renton-based business is an East-African inspired coffee shop that emphasizes the creation of a community space where all can gather to spend time with each other and enjoy a cup of coffee.

Boon Boona Coffee sources all of its beans from East-African countries and roasts everything in-house. They also make an array of house-made simple syrups and pastries.

Local coffee-goer Nestor Iwanjko is a new fan of Boon Boona's coffee and pastries.

"[They have] pretty good coffee. I am a black coffee/espresso kind of person, so this is definitely good. The scone is a pretty good breakfast too," Iwanjko said.

According to the company website, Boon Boona are both words that translate into 'coffee'. The CEO and founder, Efreem Fesaha, was inspired to create the company after traveling to Eritrea where he discovered a different culture surrounding coffee.

"There [Eritrea], you're really invited to just sit there for a number of hours and catch up with your friends. They also roasted their coffee in-house too. It was part of a traditional and fast-way approach, but it was also still like a traditional pan roast approach versus a commercial roaster in such," Fesaha said. "When I came back, I said I wanted to do something in coffee and I wanted it to be based on what I saw and experienced there. In 2011, I started working on that plan and that's kind of where it all began for Boon Boona."

Fesaha is from the West Seattle/White Center area and spent a lot of his childhood in the Central District. He is also earning his MBA at Seattle U. With his familiarity with the neighborhood, Fesaha was excited to expand Boon Boona into an area he knew well.

Boon Boona prides itself as a safe place for all to come and enjoy coffee. Diversity was an inspiration for how the business works, so Fesaha prioritizes a diverse pool of applicants when hiring employees

"Here, 95% of the industry, cafes and roasters are white. Providing an opportunity for more diversity in coffee was something that was really big to me and big in general," Fesaha said.

Boon Boona Coffee is trying to change the narrative that coffee originates from Italy. The coffee instead stems from the Eastern African region, specifically Ethiopia. Fesaha tries to make his company different from the major coffee chains through a unique hiring approach. Instead of focusing on experience, the character of the person holds greater importance.



Boon Boona roasts its coffee and carries eight different coffees from various parts of Africa. As the new location continues to take off, more products will arrive shortly. With the soft opening April 26, there are plans to expand their products.

“We are expanding what we have inside as we progress; some breakfast sandwiches, some lunch sandwiches and salads. We’re working with local vendors and we are going to bring in a local kombucha company. We’ve got our liquor license that just came through, so we will be doing beer and wine. We will be offering quite a few things. It’s a soft opening and as we get a little bit further and we’ll have more of those things in place,” Fesaha said.

Cate Kelly, a first-year double-major in anthropology and digital design found Boon Boona to be a great addition to the Seattle U community.

“I thought the feel of Boon Boona was very calming and very aesthetic ... I love the outside space. They have a little seating area and some counters that are very nice,” Kelly said.

As the weather gets better, the Seattle U community can now support and enjoy Boon Boona Coffee by purchasing items to-go or sitting outside on their patio.