



## Meet the baristas of Big Cat Coffee

BY: ELLA BARRY / ON: APRIL 16, 2024 / IN: FEATURES

If you're on campus frequently, chances are you've stopped at Big Cat Coffee to grab a quick pick-me-up or a bite to eat between classes. The on-campus coffee shop is convenient when you're cramming in the library or meeting your classmates for a group project.

The coffee shop couldn't run without the employees behind the bar taking orders and making drinks daily.

I paid a visit to the coffee shop recently to get the inside scoop on Big Cat and get to know some of the employees, like recent UCCS graduate Kiera Nocon.

Nocon began working at Big Cat Coffee in fall of 2022 and graduated from UCCS in spring of 2023 with a bachelor's degree in business. She's using her degree and her coffee shop experience to chase her dreams. "I want to open a coffee shop of my own. I plan on opening that in 2026, so a year and a half from now," she said.

Nocon made me her favorite drink, the Harvest Nut Latte, which has Irish cream, hazelnut, cinnamon and nutmeg. The Harvest Nut Latte is Nocon's invention, meant to taste like fall.

Nocon invents lots of drinks, though they're unknown to most customers. "We have this special menu that most people don't know about," Nocon said. She showed me a paper menu made up of 28 drinks with quirky titles like "Edgar Allan Poe" and "Sassy Penguin." According to Nocon, if customers want to know the specials, all they have to do is ask.

Though I ordered my drink iced, Nocon said her favorite drinks to make are the hot ones, because she can practice her latte art, which she said as she drew hearts with the foam.

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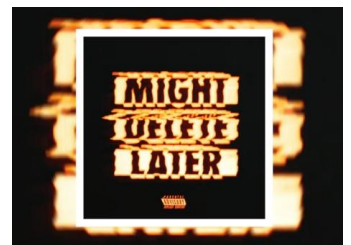
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Latte art at Big Cat Coffee. Photo by Meghan Germain.

Aysah Bates, a junior psychology and criminal justice major, works at Big Cat Coffee twice a week and spends the rest of their days in the kitchen preparing grab-and-go items like the salads and sandwiches sold at Big Cat Coffee and Alpine Express.

Bates said they love the days they get to work at the coffee shop and interact with customers. They like to make up their own drinks too, like an iced latte with white chocolate mocha and raspberry.

Charlie Conner, a freshman criminal justice major, started working at Big Cat Coffee recently, and was working his second shift while Nocon trained him on how to take orders and make drinks.

Since he's new to the team, Conner is still figuring out which drinks he likes. "I honestly haven't had many [drinks] off the whole menu, but I like a classic vanilla cold brew. It's pretty good," he said.

Conner's favorite drinks to make are chillers and smoothies. Nocon and Bates laughed in surprise, explaining their dislike of blended drinks. "I just like using the blender," Conner said. "It's loud but it's easy."

Conner and Bates both expressed their love for kind customers who make the job worth it. "People are very friendly, even customers are very understanding. 'Oh, you messed up entirely? That's OK,'" Conner said.

Big Cat Coffee has three [locations](#) on campus: the main cafe in the University Center, plus one in Columbine and one in Dwire. All three locations are open 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Friday.

*Keira Nocon (she/her), Aysah Bates (they/them) and Charlie Conner (he/him) at Big Cat Coffee. Photo by Meghan Germain.*

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Meet the baristas of Big Cat Coffee

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