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# Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About... COFFEE

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# Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About... COFFEE

## Coffee - Legends and Reality

That a mere beverage could generate so many romantic tales and so much hard-headed business is a wonder. Yet from its beginnings to the present, this dark and pungent liquid has fascinated, cured and enriched billions the world over.

Legends abound about the origins of the coffee plant, but the most reliable histories put its discovery in Ethiopia somewhere around 500 BC. From there, after observing the stimulating effects of its berries, travelers brought it to Arabia, where it acquired the name.

The Renaissance gave birth not only to science and art, but the commercial production and known-world distribution of what would later be called 'that heathenish liquid'. By the late 18th century both plantations and drinking popularity had spread to Europe, Asia, the Middle East, South and North America and to every social class.

Throughout those long centuries the health effects ascribed to coffee border on the miraculous. But, as with most claimed miracles, there's some fact at the bottom.

Some studies suggest that mammalian sperm swim faster, farther and longer in fluid laced with coffee. The theory is the caffeine stimulates them. One Harvard study followed over 100,000 individuals for almost 20 years, drawing the conclusion that moderate use can help reduce diabetes. Others show reduction in cirrhosis of the liver and decrease of asthma severity.

As with wine, the antioxidants in coffee have been touted as helping keep hearts healthier, though debates rage about whether the pros outweigh the cons. Coffee is a diuretic and encourages more frequent urination, and some assert that the stimulation from caffeine leads to long term nerve degeneration. Caffeine withdrawal can lead to increased sleeplessness. And, caffeine is a natural insecticide.

But for good or ill - or both - coffee is here to stay. The economics alone virtually guarantee that, since as a commodity coffee is second only in dollar volume to oil.

Whether traded on exchanges in London, New York, Hong Kong or Lima with over 400 billion cups consumed annually, this other 'black gold' only grows in popularity. Though only 10-20% (depending on country) of adults drink one or more cups daily, the total retail sales hovers near the \$9 billion level annually.

Add to those figures the number of raw beans, grinders, roasters, brewers and cups bought for the home and the figures become astounding.

With the rise in both basic commodity and specialty retail prices, the future for coffee businesses continues to look bright. Starbucks alone has over 10,000 outlets around the world.

And specialty coffee shops are not the only outlet for a wide choice of blends and styles. Home roasters and brewers also can enjoy espresso, invented in 1901 and growing ever since. Straight shots, long shots or double shots are a snap now with home machines.

Mocha, Latte, and Cappuccino - all available by the addition of a few ingredients at the touch of a few buttons. Flavored coffees in as great a variety as wines are easy to make, with just a dash of vanilla, caramel or fruit flavorings.

With all that history, money, and delicious variety maybe the legends weren't so far off after all.

## **Coffee and Health**

The last 25 years has seen the growth of a cottage industry in the study of the health effects of drinking coffee. And no wonder - over 400 million cups a day are consumed throughout the world. But for decades health workers warned that the habit might be unsafe. Recent studies show the opposite is more likely to be the case.

Caffeine, one of the main ingredients in coffee, has long been known to be a mild stimulant. That can raise blood pressure, increase heart rate and produce the occasional irregular beat. But most researchers now believe the effect is mild and short-lived.

By contrast, the emerging data about the health benefits of coffee consumption are numerous and diverse.

There's strong evidence that coffee reduces the odds of developing colon cancer, but only at higher levels of consumption - four cups a day or more. That much intake may well outweigh the benefits.

But other benefits accrue even at moderate levels of coffee drinking.

Coffee, like wine, contains antioxidants that help prevent heart disease and certain cancers by removing cell-destroying oxygen radicals from the blood. Some studies say the concentration of antioxidants is greater than that found in cranberries, apples or tomatoes. Scientists, however, point to the many other valuable vitamins, minerals and fibers in fruits and vegetables.

Apart from the obvious contribution to mental alertness, Chinese studies strongly suggest that coffee can even help reduce the effects of Parkinson's disease.

American and Scandinavian studies both suggest that decaf and regular coffee help reduce the risk of type-2 diabetes. Good news for the Scandinavians who have the highest per capita consumption in the world.

There's some evidence that coffee may reduce the risk of developing kidney stones and gallstones. Other digestive system benefits have been seen, as well. Caffeine increases the secretion of stomach acid, which aids digestion.

Caffeine has been shown to reduce constriction of airways in asthma sufferers, with moderate consumption. In addition to the caffeine, coffee contains theophylline, a bronchodilator which helps the effect.

But those benefits, not surprisingly, come with risks.

Though mammalian sperm swim faster, longer and farther in fluids laced with coffee some studies link heavy coffee drinking with reduced fertility.

Increased coffee consumption has been associated with higher blood levels of homocysteine, recently shown to be a risk factor for coronary heart disease. Other studies show an increase in LDL-cholesterol (the 'harmful' kind). To what degree these factors actually contribute to heart attacks is a matter of debate.

Coffee contains cafestol, which is known to raise cholesterol levels, mainly in coffee made by the European method of boiling ground beans in water. Percolated or filtered coffee, favored by most Americans, however, removes it. Decaf coffee may be an exception.

Women who drink coffee lose more calcium and tend to have less dense bones than non-caffeine consumers. Those who drink four or more cups per day also have twice the risk of urinary incontinence.

All in all, though, most agree that the benefits - at least at moderate consumption levels - outweigh the risks. By the way, for those heavy drinkers looking for a substitute, colas contain one-third the amount of caffeine per ounce. But somehow drinking a Coke instead of a Latte doesn't seem worth the risk.

## **Coffee Bean Growing**

For a tree grown in over 70 countries, from Indonesia to Brazil, it's curious how narrow a range of conditions is required to produce quality 'beans' and how relatively small the total output is.

The word 'beans' is deliberately in single-quote marks, since the thing that gets roasted and ground to make the drink isn't really a bean at all, it's a seed.

In particular, it's the seed of a fruit that grows on trees that can easily reach twenty feet or more. Some wild varieties grow to over 45 feet or 15m. Most of those seeds come in a pair, though there is a variety that produces only one (the peaberry). The berry resembles a cranberry, with a sweet pulp covered by a membrane called a silverskin.

In a band around the equator from approximately 25 degrees north or south, comes the overwhelming majority of the world's coffee output. Temperatures of between 60F (15C) and 70F (21C) are best as is rainfall of six inches per month or more.

Loamy, good-draining soil is needed and also helpful is high humidity - plenty of mist and cloud at the high elevations, over 3000 ft (915m) for the good stuff. At these elevations the oxygen content is lower, so the trees take longer to mature.

The robusta, or *coffea canephora*, goes into making the majority of coffee because it can be grown at lower altitudes and is more disease resistant. But it's the high-altitude *coffea arabica* that forms the base of a gourmet cup.

Diffuse light and moderate winds are helpful, both of which are sometimes produced by deliberately growing in the shelter and shade. By contrast, wine grapes like hot sun and lots of it.

Once planted, the tree takes about five years to mature to first crop and even then a single tree will only make enough for about two pounds (1 kilogram) of coffee.

Those two pounds equal about 2,000 beans, (correct or not, it's the standard term), usually hand-picked by manual laborers. Manual they may be, but ignorant they are not. Coffee bean harvesting is a skill developed over time, where the picker learns to select good beans and discard the bad. Bean by individual bean. That's only one reason coffee is high priced.

The trees have broad, dark green leaves and produce a flower that resembles Jasmine. Some - in Brazil and Mexico, for example, - blossom over a six to eight week period. In countries that lie along the equator such as Kenya and Colombia, though, a tree can have mature berries growing alongside still ripening ones. That's part of what makes picking such a specialty.

Blossom to harvest may cover a period of up to nine months depending on the weather and other factors and the cycle will be carried out for the life of the tree - about 20-25 years. With the best cultivation technology, a good harvest will be between 6,600 lbs (3,000 kg) and 8,800 lbs (4,000 kg) per hectare. (One hectare is about 2.47 acres.)

From these inaccessible regions, where conditions are harsh, the berries are brought down and processed to make up the world's second largest commodity (by annual dollar volume).

So, the next time you savor that brew, give a thought to the long journey it traveled to reach your cup. It might make that high price seem less steep.

### **Coffee Bean Producers Around The World**

From its origins in Ethiopia, where the main coffee production is still from wild coffee tree forests, coffee consumption has spread throughout the world. But because of its requirement for ample sunshine and rain, the plants from which beans are produced grow only in tropical or sub-tropical regions.

From a narrow band centered on the equator of around 23 degrees North to 25 degrees South comes all of the world's source of the liquid that a Turkish proverb calls 'black as hell, strong as

death, sweet as love'. As a commodity, coffee - from beans grown in over 70 countries - is second only to oil in dollar volume.

Brazil remains by far the largest coffee bean producer with an average output of 28% of the total. Even world-renowned Colombia is a distant second at only 16%, with Indonesia less than half that at 7%. Mexico, the fourth largest producer is half again at 4%.

Coffee trees produce the best beans in high altitudes but have adapted to a variety of areas.

In Brazil, the plantations cover huge areas and employ hundreds of workers to tend the plants. In Colombia the rugged mountains and poor economic conditions mean transportation to processing centers is still largely carried out by mule or Jeep.

While Colombia has the tree-lined mountains, Hawaiian producers plant on the slopes of the Mauna Loa volcano. The black volcanic ash is rocky, but perfect for the plants where the intense afternoon sun is softened by tropical clouds. Frequent island showers provide the ample rain needed.

Indonesia is composed of thousands of islands, where coffee has been grown since the Dutch colonists introduced it in the 17th century. Though other countries have greater technology, no one exceeds the helpful warm, damp micro-climates found here. Hundreds of one to two acre farms on the largest islands of Sumatra, Java and Sulawesi combine to secure the country's third place position.

Plantations in Mexico, by contrast to Brazil, are primarily small farms but with over 100,000 of them the total still makes the country a serious factor on the world market. Most are located in the south, in Veracruz, Oaxaca and Chiapas with the special Altura beans indicating their origin in the high altitudes.

Vietnam in recent years has rapidly been challenging Indonesia's position as the Tonkin area recovers from decades of stagnation. First planted with arabica trees in the mid-19th century by French missionaries, the small plantations now produce robusta, one of the two main types of plant.

Africa, Kenya and the Ivory Coast, though smaller producers, are world-famous for the dark, large beans grown there. In the foothills of Mount Kenya they grow some of the largest plants in the world, which go to produce a well-known fruity coffee. The Ivory Coast holds its position as one of the world's largest producers of robusta, often used in espresso blends.

Whether the Brazilian Liberdade, the Costa Rican La Fuente, the Indian Monsoon Malabar or the Tanzanian Peaberry, coffees from around the world continue to find eager consumers everywhere.

## **Coffee Varieties Around The World**

Once upon a time in America there was drip or instant, milk or sugar. Folger's was the name of the game. Then, from Australian Skybury to Kenyan Peaberry, from Kona to Barcelona, the world exploded with options. Today there's enough variety in choices of blend, country and style to boggle the greatest coffee aficionado.

Of course there is Brazil, the world's largest producer for more than a century. Not surprising considering a third of its landmass is suitable for coffee tree growing. This South American powerhouse produces wonderful aromatic blends from Bahia and Minas Gerais.

Colombia, perhaps even better known - even though second in volume - makes a light, sweet delight that comes in 'supremo' or 'excelso'. The coffees made from Popayan or Narino are surpassed nowhere.

But beyond these two giants of coffee bean production there lies a world of different blends that add their own distinctive colors to the spectrum of choices.

Mexico refuses to bow down to its better known South or Central American cousins. The small beans grown there produce a delicate body and light acidity, giving the coffee a mellow flavor. And Cuba, with its extremely strong cafe cubano - drunk like a shot of tequila - joins its Spanish relatives for a jolt.

Indonesia is well-known for its finely aged coffees, where the warm, damp climate slowly produces a drink with deep body and less acidity. As the fourth largest producer it isn't likely to run out soon.

Malaysia won't be cowed by its more famous neighbor, though. The venerable practice of brewing in a muslin bag, used to filter grounds, produces a strong cup. Even the lesser grade Liberica should be experienced at least once.

Even tiny Thailand weighs in with a chicory-tinged blend served with ice and condensed milk, for those who enjoy their coffee cold.

The Kona from Mauna Loa is sweet, medium-bodied and aromatic, while the Java from Sumatra is full-flavored and rich. Even the Beanya from Kenya, grown at 17,000 feet is smooth and deep, with a slight aftertaste that defies description.

But the practice of roasting and crushing beans then filtering through hot water, born in the 15th century, has produced many more delights for the coffee addict.

Naturally, the Europeans won't take second place to anyone. France still favors its cafe au lait - half-coffee, half-milk. And Austria still values the two-thirds dark, one-third regular that has been a traditional Viennese blend for centuries.

Thanks to Luigi Bezzera in 1901 and later M. Cremonesi in 1938, there are Italian espressos to die for. And since they contain less caffeine than others, you can have two and not feel guilty.

For those for whom that's still too strong, there are the weaker latte and cappuccino (named for the hood on a monk's habit).

But for my money, the good old American black is the coffee, the whole coffee, and nothing but the coffee.

## **Coffee Varieties Around The World - Part 2**

There are as many beans and coffees from around the world as there are grapes and wine - and as much delight to be had in sampling them.

The Colombian is, rightly so, world-renowned. The La Esperanza from Tolima, for example, is grown at almost 6,000 feet and the effect shows. High-toned with a delicate aroma and cherry-like it has hints of milk chocolate and pipe tobacco. Who knew such a mixture could actually taste wonderful?

Of course, the world's second largest producer has much more to offer. The Supremo makes a complex brew with vanilla notes and hints of semi-sweet chocolate. Be sure to drink hot, as it fades fast.

Hopping over to Hawaii, the hand-picked Kona comes in both medium and dark roast. The latter has a very light acid with the medium making for slightly more. But the espresso roast remains a favorite, where the minimally acidic, dark and strong character really shines.

Jetting off to Africa we find a Tanzanian Peaberry, grown on the southern slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro. Peaberries have a distinctive shape, making a single oval bean rather than the usual pair of flat-sided beans. One consequence is a higher acidity and lighter body. Climbers of the famous mountain can find a warming cup on their way up.

And while there, take a side jaunt to the legendary home of coffee - Ethiopia. The Yirgacheffe region is home to a citrusy brew that combines ginger, orange peel and lemon that's both tart and chocolaty.

Trekking east to India we rest to take in another famous landmark - the Monsoon Malabar. The product of three months of the well-known wet winds, the puffy yellow beans make for a pungent brew with hints of apricot. But don't leave without sampling one of the Jumboors, with its sweet raisin tones.

Continuing east to Indonesia we find ourselves in Sumatra, long known for the product from the Lake Toba region. A light roast, the cup is sweet and flowery. The original jasmine-like coffee flower has been retained to produce an astringent cup with cherry overtones.

And while there don't forget about the northern provinces where the traditional dark roast gives a spicy, tropical fruit brew with hints of cedar and grapefruit.

A short flight to Vietnam puts us in a position to enjoy a Robusta from Lampung. The washing-drying-polishing process makes for a woody, astringent cup that competes well with its more high-toned Arabica cousin.

On the way home, a stopover in Jamaica provides an opportunity to discover an unusual source. The Jamaican peaberry, showing its African origins is a single bean. But the effect is altogether different. Full-bodied, sweetly acid, and full of floral notes this cup comes on strong.

Weary from the journey, but satisfied and satiated, we close our book of 'Travels Around The Globe' then turn out the light and switch off the coffee pot. Even with all that caffeine we should have no trouble sleeping.

### **Judging Beans The Barista Way**

A 'barista' is someone who makes coffee drinks as a profession. Naturally, that experience will shape how beans are judged.

'Cuppers' (coffee contest judges or professional tasters) and company buyers share the barista's goal of finding beans which produce a great drink. But it's the barista who stands in front of the final consumer every day and receives immediate feedback on the success or failure of those efforts.

So, let's find out what the barista thinks about a bean and its product...

Roughly 70 countries now grow coffee from which beans are produced, from Africa to the Middle East, from South America to the Caribbean and over to Hawaii - all within a band about the equator of roughly 25 degrees north or south.

Not surprisingly then, given the differences in climate altitude, equipment and techniques - and a host of other factors - beans from different countries show marked differences. Even different plantations will often have drastically different products.

Even so, coffee plants come in two main categories - arabica and robusta. With half the caffeine of the robusta, the arabica is used almost exclusively for the finest coffees. Its beans are more flavorful and full of aroma.

Since coffee grows better at higher altitudes the Milds - arabica beans from plants grown at 3000 feet (915m) or above - are to be preferred. 'Brazils' by contrast are arabica beans grown in Brazil, but at a much lower altitude.

Beyond that, judgments will differ depending on whether the consumer intends to 'roast their own' or not. Unroasted beans are green, soft and have a vegetative odor, which is normal.

For those seeking roasted, the categories broaden. There's a light or 'cinnamon' (named for the color of the spice; nothing to do with the flavor). These are acidic and highly caffeinated.

The medium or 'American' roast is slightly darker and enormously popular since it's the degree used by the major coffee vendors (Folger, Yuban, etc). Not a quality cup by most barista's standards.

Dark or 'City' roast is what is seen in many specialty shops, where the process has reduced the caffeine and acid taste. The result is a less bitter, often sweeter cup. This is what's generally used for the average espresso.

Next in line is the 'French' roast, so named because the French tend to prefer their coffee more full-bodied. The beans will appear very dark brown and have an oily texture or sheen. Look carefully and sniff so as not to confuse these with beans that have merely been burnt.

Darkest on the drinkable scale is the 'Italian' roast, often used in specialty espressos. The deep brown color and pungent aroma are distinctive and make a fine cup.

As one goes down the scale of color, the cups made from these beans will be increasingly less acid and more sweet. This is a consequence of the caramelization (browning and thickening into syrup) of sugars resulting from the roasting process. At the same time some of the caffeine - a bitter chemical - is burned away, producing a mellower cup.

So, next time you shop for beans give a thought to the barista who stands daily in front of an array of choices and with an arsenal of machines. That person knows beans.

## **From Beans to Shelf**

From its origins over two thousand years ago, coffee bean processing has grown to a worldwide market whose output as a commodity has a dollar value second only to petroleum.

Though there are dozens of bean varieties, the plants fall into two main classes: the arabica, first cultivated on the Arabian Peninsula, and the robusta which contains about twice the caffeine.

By contrast to wine, the coffee berry (called a 'cherry') is not valued for its fruit, but only for the bean inside. It's that bean that is aged, roasted, ground and brewed to make the 400 million cups per day consumed around the world.

The beans come in two main varieties, green and red, with the latter - with its higher aromatic oil and lower acid content - used to produce the finer coffees. Hence one of the most important stages in the life cycle of bean to shelf is the picking.

Since most beans are hand picked by laborers, at the rate of a few baskets per day, separating the red and green is a valued skill and has a large effect on the final product.

After picking, the fruit is removed by soaking, scouring and mechanical rubbing. Then the beans are washed to remove any remaining flesh. This 'fermentation' stage produces beans which are then dried in the sun over large concrete or rock slabs, until they have about 12% water content.

From there the beans are sorted by color and size, sometimes by hand increasingly often by machine. Some of the beans are discarded, others polished to remove the skin. For select types, the beans are then aged anywhere from three to eight years, while others go to be roasted within a year.

During the 400-degree Fahrenheit roasting the beans expand to about twice their dry size, crack and change color from green to brown as oil in the interior is released. It's this oil that gives the different coffees their basic flavor.

Naturally a wide variety of in-house techniques have developed for roasting. Beans from Java and Kenya, for example, are often lightly roasted producing a distinctive flavor. After roasting, the beans produce carbon dioxide for several days so the beans are 'de-gassed' either by airing or packaging in semi-permeable shipping bags.

The resulting beans, up to a few weeks later, are then ground where again there are variations in styles and results. In some cases, 'burr' grinders are used to crush the beans to a consistent-sized granule. In others, choppers are used to chop the beans into small pieces with a less homogeneous-sized result. Turkish coffee is made by pounding the beans to a powdery consistency, using mortar and pestle.

The final result is then brewed, where the variety of styles and techniques is almost as great as the number of brewers. All these fine differences fall into one of four categories, however: boiling, pressure, gravity and steeping.

In 'boiling', hot water is run through the grounds then filtered or settled. In pressure methods, such as espresso, the slightly-less-than-boiling-hot water is forced through the grounds at high pressure. Gravity or 'drip brew' drips hot water onto coffee grounds and filters. Steeping is similar to the method of tea bags, though the bags are much larger.

Through its long journey from mountains or jungles, coffee beans go into making up one of the world's most treasured drinks. And with the new research demonstrating the health benefits of moderate consumption, one has even greater reason to be grateful for the effort. Cheers to coffee!

## **Roasting, Not Boasting**

Home wine makers will be happy to hear that roasting coffee beans is even easier - and the results are often as good as the pros.

A variety of roaster types are available, but even a frying pan or popcorn popper can be used. Be sure to start with ultra-clean equipment, though. Nothing spoils the taste of coffee like left over fish oils or butter.

Dark roasts contain a little less caffeine than lighter roasts, but they lack the acid taste of the latter. Be sure to start with quality beans, of course!

The beans will need to heat to between 460F (223C) and 530F (262C), so be prepared for some smoke. That's easily taken care of with a small room fan or stove top exhaust. Beyond the smoke there will be an odor, so your first experiments should probably be done with the windows open and no one home.

Put the beans in the roaster and turn up the heat! (Take care to be ready to temporarily disable those over-sensitive home fire alarms.)

For some roasters, the thermometer is built-in, but you may want to have an extra for when it's open, or for those frying pan experiments. Candy making thermometers work well for the purpose.

During the process those green beans will turn yellow, then brown. How brown depends on how dark you like your roast, which is always an individual choice.

As they begin to heat up, moisture - both oil and water - will put pressure on the bean surface and you may hear a loud crack when it bursts. Not to worry, this is normal. Stirring every 30 seconds or more, you'll hear this after four to seven minutes of heating.

The sugars inside the beans will begin to caramelize (turn brown and 'burn' slightly) as the roasting continues. Again the degree is a matter of taste. Check the color every 30 seconds or so.

Roast long enough and sometimes a second loud crack will occur. At this stage the beans will be quite dark and for some palates a little overdone. Beyond the second crack you're really just burning the beans and boiling away the sugars. The results will be too harsh for most.

Pour into a metal colander to cool, then agitate. Since the roasting process produces chaff (a fine skin that detaches from the bean as they're agitated), you'll want some method for removing it. Mesh cooking screens are one option.

Try a few batches with varying degrees of time or darkening. Experiment to get the flavor you like. Keep in mind that the heat trapped in the bean will continue to cook it for a short while, so try stopping a little short of your desired end goal.

For the popcorn popper style roasting, be sure to get one that allows you to stir up the beans to keep them moving around and not sticking to the surfaces. For the stove top style, a cast iron skillet works great. Be prepared for lots of stirring and viewing. Roasting happens quickly!

## **Coffee Roasters**

Coffee roasters - the mechanical device, not the human profession - come in all shapes and sizes. Prices range from a few dozen dollars to nearly a thousand. Of course, as with any manufactured product, price doesn't necessarily correlate exactly with quality. Beyond looking to a reliable brand, here are a few tips about what to look for, based on your goals.

How much involvement do you want?

Some people just have a bit of the chemist in them. They like to mix and stir, whirl and measure. Roasters vary along this dimension. Some simple stove top models are basically just a sauce pan with a tight lid and a special handle.

The handle contains a crank that allows the roaster to stir up the beans during the process. Stirring is essential to keep the beans from burning on the bottom as well as to keep the hot air inside circulating evenly.

Even in this simple set up, be sure to look for ones that have a thermometer in the lid. Temperature control is important for proper roasting.

At the other extreme are roasters that do it all for you. Pop in a pre-determined volume of green beans from a bag, close the lid and walk away for a few minutes.

These deluxe models have inbuilt thermometers, thermostatically controlled heating mechanisms, clever air-flow control geometry and rotating canisters and a timer to automatically shut off the device at the proper time.

At the upper end of the price range, these rocket ship roasters do everything but eliminate the smoke that invariably accompanies the process.

How effectively do they heat and circulate air?

The most common type are air roasters that work more or less like a popcorn popper. Hot air is circulated throughout the mixture, while the beans are agitated. This gives a uniform roast and some models can even filter out the chaff produced as the skins burst from the expansion of the bean.

Most allow you to watch the process through a glass exterior, to judge the degree of desired roast. Frequently they have pre-set amounts on the dial ranging from light to dark.

The ability to circulate air evenly and heat uniformly is critical and designs vary in the degree to which they meet these goals. For example, a roaster with a heating source only at the bottom and constricted air flow is going to provide an uneven roast.

Drum roasters help overcome this problem, by providing a rotating drum that uses gravity to move the beans around, rather than relying solely on a stirrer at the bottom.

Beware, though. Many don't have windows for observing the roasting process - a must for those who like to experiment and fine-tune the roast. And, not surprisingly, with the greater quantity of bean comes a larger volume of smoke. Be prepared to ventilate well.

Once confined to more professional use, home devices are now readily available and have the added benefit of being able to roast larger quantities. Useful for those large dinner parties where you want the freshest possible coffee. And who doesn't want that?

### **All Gourmet Coffee, All The Time**

Congratulations. You've decided to enter the world of gourmet coffee. It's a world where the coffee is the tastiest and freshest possible, where the beans have traveled from the coffee fields to the roaster to your mug as quickly as humanly possible. It's a world where you can shop from coffee dealers from all over the world. You'll find beans from Africa with their red wine flavors, for instance, or Central America with their smooth acidity and easy drinking taste. What's more, whatever gourmet coffee you choose, you can be sure that our master roasters will accentuate the exquisite flavors and aromas of each and every blend.

That means your gourmet coffee will arrive at your door with the insurance that all varieties will have consistent quality bean after bean. You see, coffee roasting is as an art. Our roasters know that each coffee bean is an individual, possessing a different size, shape, color, and density. Each demands unique roasting heat and timing to draw out its full flavor.

You can find much more than just gourmet coffee here, too. As all coffee aficionados know, the key to brewing these coffee blends is the right machine. There are still the old-fashioned drip machines, which are one of the easiest types to use for beginners and coffee experts alike. Of course, for the hard-core experts we have the old-fashioned presses and hand brew machines, which are back in favor. Then you have the newest technology, the pod coffee machines. These are like a European coffeehouse machine, infusing hot water through coffee pads. And then for espresso lovers, there are pressurized steam espresso makers.

Make sure, whatever machine you use, to also shop for the proper filter to put between it and your gourmet coffee. The best filters are gold, nylon, or some other permanent filter material. That's because permanent filters allow most all of the flavor molecules from the coffee grinds to make it into the water.

Our gourmet coffee store also houses one of the best ways to get the best flavor from your blend: bean grinders. Coffee grinders release the bean oils and aromas at the moment you make your pot of java. It's like getting a fresh cup from a coffeehouse each and every time your brew.

With all of this selection—from gourmet coffee to machines to grinders—you won't need to go anywhere else to stock your kitchen with the best products available. You'll have all of the products you need to wow your guests come dessert, and wake yourself up in style each and every morning.

## Specialty Coffees

In the 1930s, physicists started discovering a whole zoo full of exotic atomic particles. There were muons and kaons and who-knows-whatelse-ons. When told of these, the famous physicist Enrico Fermi said: 'If I wanted to remember all that I would have become a botanist.' Ironically, later he invented the process used in atomic bombs.

I feel the same way about coffee. It may be fascinating and delicious and even romantic, but sheesh - all those names!

There's the elegant and simple Frappe, but with a silent 'e'. Widely consumed in Europe and Latin America, it's a cold espresso made with two teaspoons of sugar and milk with crushed ice cubes. For a nice variation, add a quarter cup each of brandy and crème de cacao. Since it's served with a straw, I just wish those drinking it were silent, too.

The counterpart to the innocent Frappe is the wicked Cappuccino Borgia, named for the famed poisoner. You'll just die for one of these quarter-cup peeled orange, one and a half cup chocolate ice cream dreams. Add also six tablespoons of orange juice and a quarter-cup milk to an espresso, blend and start speaking 15th century Italian.

Re-enter the 21st century and jet to the Caribbean for a Calypso Cooler. A cup of chilled, extra strength coffee gets subjected to a couple of ripe bananas and two cups of coffee ice cream. Add four tablespoons of rum and lose your luggage.

While we're adding alcohol to our coffee, let's not forget the mysterious Latin: Caffee Zabaglione. A quarter cup of dry Marsala with a quarter cup of sugar starts the feast. Add a pinch of salt and four egg yolks, then whisk and cook until thick. Add a cup of Italian roast at room temperature and you've got a drink, breakfast and a hangover cure all in one.

But the ancestors of Rome have nothing on those of France in modern New Orleans. Add double strength American roast to a half-cup each of heavy cream, eggnog and bourbon and you have a Mardi Gras, with a silent 's'. Too bad the crowd isn't silent - it's 4 a.m. and I'm trying to sleep.

Ordinary Turkish coffee is famous for its dark, strong flavor cut with cardamom. But they're not the only ones to have discovered a good use for this ancient spice. Scandinavians make a Cardamom Kaffee.

Start with an eighth-cup of cognac and add two teaspoons of curacao, a teaspoon of sugar and a cardamom pod (cracked and seeded). Heat in the microwave for about ten seconds then light with a match. Pour on a half-cup of extra strength coffee and be prepared to douse a four-alarm fire.

Despite all the names, I have to give credit to the many creative inventors of all those different mixtures. They may not have invented huge bombs, but their products sure do give you a jolt!

## Coffee Recipes By The Cup

One of the many advantages of drinking a beverage both ancient and international is the delightful variety of recipes for enjoying coffee in different ways. Caribbean, Mexican mocha, Cuban cubano and Grog are only a few out of an endless list of possibilities.

The first is one of the more unusual, but be daring. Start by baking a coconut for thirty minutes at 300F (134C). Remove and allow to cool, then break open the shell and remove the inner flesh and grate. Mix the meat, coconut milk and a half cup of cow's milk in a pan and heat until it thickens. Then strain the mixture to remove the coconut granules. Mix the mixture with a cup of coffee and sip. Hmm...

Like any mocha, the Mexican is a delicious blend of coffee and chocolate - two natural partners. Take a teaspoon of your favorite chocolate syrup and add a quarter teaspoon of cinnamon and nutmeg. Pour in one cup of coffee and add white or organic sugar to taste. You can mix with whipping cream, or top with whipped cream, too. Mmm...

Cubano is drunk like tequila, straight and like a shot. For the Americano, you might want to dilute with rum or hot milk. Add rum to taste, but any more than a tablespoonful of milk will really spoil the effect. Be adventurous!

Grog is a traditional English holiday treat. Carefully peel a large orange and separate into slices. Do the same with a lemon. Put a peel about the size of one orange slice into the bottom of the cup. Mix in one-third tablespoon of butter, a tablespoon of brown sugar, a pinch each of ground cloves and nutmeg. Then throw in a pinch of cinnamon. Pour in a half-cup of coffee and stir. Add heavy cream to taste. Happy holidays.

There are other international delights, such as Viennese, Turkish and Vietnamese.

For the Viennese, melt one-eighth cup dark chocolate into a sauce pan and stir in one tablespoon of light cream. Slowly add a half-cup of coffee and whip until frothy, then let settle. Sprinkle cinnamon and cocoa across the surface and taste with pinky raised. Now you're an aristocrat.

The Turkish is simple. You'll benefit from obtaining one of the special "džezva" pots used to boil the coffee. Yes, boil! Turkish coffee is strong. Start with finely ground Turkish coffee. Pour a cup of water into the pot, then add a half teaspoon of sugar and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and add a teaspoon of the coffee, then stir and replace onto the heat. Remove after a layer of foam appears, then allow to settle and cool.

The iced coffee drink of Vietnam is not to be missed. Acquire a Vietnamese coffee press. The hard part is now over. Put the ground coffee in the press, then pour a tablespoon of condensed milk into the bottom of a cup. Pour boiling water over the press and let drip. Stir and add ice. Wow!

Of course, you could save yourself the trouble and simply take a little world tour, letting the locals do all the work. Not a bad idea actually.

## **Cupping, The Tasting Art**

Why should professionals have all the fun? 'Cuppers' taste coffee as an adjunct to professional buying, judging contests, writing reviews and so forth. But the joy of sitting before a half-dozen cups of Tanzanian Peaberry, Monsoon Mysore and the rest is a delight anyone can experience.

The cupper tastes (and smells) for aroma, flavor, body, acidity, finish and a wide variety of more subtle attributes. To reproduce the professional setting at home one can start with a simple arrangement.

Have an ample supply of fresh, filtered water. Even the best grounds are spoiled by tainted water. Water can become 'stale', by absorbing odors from the air, by excessive distasteful minerals such as sulfur or even by the growth of mildew in pipes. Avoid distilled or softened water that retains too much of the softening salts.

A tray that holds a dozen small glasses or cupping bowls is handy. An assortment of measuring scoops, spoons, etc completes the tools. Of course, don't forget the coffee!

Boil the water and grind the beans with a burr grinder set to different settings for the number of different trials desired. You'll be surprised what a difference the fineness of the grind makes to the final result.

Prepare the coffee, allowing any samples to steep for a few minutes. Filter the coffee or allow to settle and spoon out a sample, then smell. Take the aroma in, running it through the nose and concentrating. Then taste, by running the liquid over the entire tongue. Hold for a few seconds, then spit into a container.

Think about the coffee's profile. Is it woody or winey? Acidic or smooth? Syrupy or thin? Peppery or floral? It's amazing how varied different coffees are, but given the wide variety of climates, soil and preparation methods it shouldn't be too surprising.

Experiment with coffees of different countries - a Kenyan AA (darker, rougher) is quite different from a Colombian (more floral), which is different yet again from a Yemen Mocha (winey).

Try different roasts from light to very dark, American to Viennese. Change the grind from rough to very fine. Even with the same bean, modifying the roast and grind can make a big difference.

Generally you'll want to have about two tablespoons (10 grams) of coffee for each six fluid ounces (180 ml) of water. Adjust as you experiment. The water should be not very far from 200F (93C), but you can adjust this too as you try different 'recipes'.

### **Keep in mind some of the different attributes of the profile:**

*Acid* - a tartness that tastes somewhat dry, noticeable in a Mexican, softer in a Sumatra brew. Aging can make a big difference here, as does the roast.

*Aroma* - the sensation produced by vapors, fruity or herb-like. Kona(s) are known for a floral aroma.

*Bitter* - From caffeine and other compounds, a robusta will generally be more bitter than an arabica. Sense by swishing on the back of the tongue.

*Body* - Degree of 'thickness', a light American roast will contrast sharply with a dark French, for example.

*Nuttiness* - Created by aldehydes and ketones, creates a sensation like roasted nuts. A sign, usually, of poor quality beans.

*Sharpness* - a sensation from the combination of acids and salts. Pronounced in inexpensive robusta.

Experiment with many different blends and brews and you'll soon find yourself a true coffee snob!

### **Coffee: Straight or Mixed? - A Purist Reforms**

True coffee aficionados always drink their coffee straight, right? Wrong! There are, if anything, more blends and flavorings of coffee than there are of wine. Cast off your confines and let loose with the 101 different ways to enjoy nature's gift.

The creativity of blenders is inexhaustible. One Indonesian blend is a combination of Sumatran and Papua New Guinea beans that makes for a delicious, full-bodied brew. Who even knew that Papua New Guineans grew coffee?

But Sumatra goes with more than just other Indonesian beans. A 50/50 mixture of Colombian Patron with Sumatran results in a smoky, tasty, dark roast that brews to perfection.

Flavorings, too, can make for a treat. Almond, vanilla, even cherry added to a Brazilian can soften the acid and sweeten the brew. Even a banana hazelnut can bring an ordinary robusta up to the level of a decent cup. But the highlight would have to be a Tahitian vanilla latte, a truly international breakthrough.

When it comes to making a mocha, the variety of chocolates matches the different options of bean. A Yemeni with a touch of dark chocolate, melted and stirred well, will enhance an already wonderful foreign blend. Or, for those days when lighter is better, try an American roast with a bit of Ghiradelli milk chocolate. Yum.

The variations possible with coffee are as boundless as they are delightful. And they're not limited to beans, roasts or flavorings. Several different liqueurs and liquors provide another route for the coffee lover to travel.

Full-bodied Jamaican forms a solid base to which to add dessert pears, brown sugar and a hearty helping of rum. For a twist, try brandy instead of rum or apricots instead of pears. And,

Amaretto's sweetness makes a delectable counterpoint to a Costa Rican blend, for those who like getting intoxicated and sober with the same drink.

Cocoa and coffee is a traditional favorite for those who like their coffee cut. Even here the choices are not limited. Cold or hot, Mexican coffee and cocoa bean partners can pair up to make for a taste treat in summer or winter.

And the innovators of coffee confection don't stop there. The more audacious have gone so far as to offer a frozen cappuccino that wakes up the sleepy on a warm day. For added zing, try mixing with a chocolate mint flavoring.

It's unclear why a coffee lover would want decaf, but there are those who don't have to get up in the morning. For them, the choices are numerous. Italian Espresso, Decaf Marrakesh and even a Dutchman (a blend of Indonesian, Central American and African) can cover the map for those who don't enjoy 'the shakes'.

Normally nuttiness indicates a poor quality bean. But be a contrarian and go for the Macadamia with or without chocolate. Even raspberry or coconut additions have been tried, but it might be better to work up to that. After all, it should still taste like coffee!

Just don't come complaining when you can no longer be satisfied with an ordinary cup of Joe. Leaving the world of Purism has its risks.

## **Coffee In Food, Yum!**

Lovers of the drink know how delicious that liquid dream can be. But delights abound in using coffee as an ingredient in food preparation too.

While commonly used in desserts - and we'll look at a couple - the uses of coffee aren't limited to sweets. Barbecue sauces and glazes for meat, chili and even pot roasts benefit from a dash of the ground bean.

In any recipe, freshness is essential, so either buy freshly ground or grind your own and use right away. And if the recipe calls for brewed coffee, make it just before preparing the dish with good filtered water. And remember, most recipes call for coffee two or three times as strong as you'd want to drink.

Here are only a few of the many possibilities...

### **Coffee Meatloaf Sauce**

Australian Meatloaf is becoming increasingly popular outside kangaroo country.

For the sauce add a tablespoon of instant coffee to a quarter cup of water and half-cup of ketchup with a quarter cup of a favorite dry red and equal amount of Worcestershire sauce.

Two tablespoons of vinegar, an ounce of margarine and two tablespoons of lemon juice with some brown sugar complete the mixture.

After the meat has cooked for 30 minutes, add the sauce and bake 45 minutes more at 375F (190C).

### **Espresso Brownies**

To make brownies surpassing even Alice B. Toklas', try this one.

Heat a cup of sugar, a quarter teaspoon of salt, and a stick and a half of butter in a sauce pan. Add a teaspoon of vanilla and four ounces of chopped, semi-sweet chocolate and stir until well melted. Now add a tablespoon of your favorite finely ground dark-roast. For an interesting variation substitute with two teaspoons of espresso granules.

Stir until everything is well mixed, then transfer to a mixing bowl and let cool for a few minutes.

While still warm, fold in three eggs, a cup of flour and pour the result into a baking pan. Bake for 30 minutes and set out to cool. Yum!

### **Black Russian Cake**

Select a favorite dark chocolate cake mix and add a cup of vegetable oil, a package of instant chocolate pudding, four eggs, and a half cup of creme de cacao. Now add a cup of your favorite Russian coffee. (1 oz vodka, 1/2 oz Kahlua, 5 oz hot black coffee.)

Beat until smooth and pour into a tube pan, then bake 45 minutes at 350F (177C). Da!

The possibilities are endless. Muffins, cookies, breads and all manner of candy - not to mention those well known ice creams - are enhanced by the addition of coffee.

Even cocktails get a boost from the ancient bean. Besides the famous Kahlua there are a wide variety of liqueurs that can be used to enhance a pie.

There's even a recipe for coffee syrup. Mix a cup of sugar with a cup of double strength Colombian. Boil in a saucepan, stirring constantly to keep the sugar dissolved. Lower the heat and simmer for three minutes, stirring often. Then cool. Try it!

Bon cafetite!

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