



THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR THE RETAIL TEA AND COFFEE TRADES

Boughton's COFFEE HOUSE



See Max the Bean at www.coffee-house.org.uk

Sept/Oct 2009

Britain to get its first consumer coffee festival?

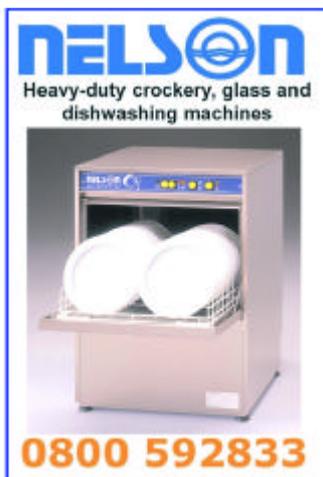
The first imaginative move of Britain's most important year in coffee is an unexpected one - it is the proposed Bath Coffee Festival, set for 15th-16th May next year.

The concept of a coffee event open to the public has been most successfully achieved in Australia, where the Sydney Rocks Aroma Festival draws tens of thousands of visitors, with coffee roasters offering speciality brews at very low prices, and makers of domestic coffee machines strongly represented. The Bath project is being run by Linda Donaldson of Geometry, a local press agency which has experience in running community events.

The project already has the interest of the city's authorities, because beyond simply promoting the coffee trade there is a stated aim of promoting Bath as a venue, ideas of employment and networking activities, and a promise of at least half the profits going to local community projects and charities.

Reaction from the trade in the early days of the idea has been cautious, but curious - typically, Angus McKenzie of Metropolitan said: "I think it could be a terrific idea - I have often looked enviously at the events in America and Australia, and thought what a great opportunity they give. It could be a grand day out for consumers... and giving the consumer more knowledge about coffee can only benefit us all."

More trade initiatives leading up to 2010 - page 7



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Con-man at the espresso van

Make sure you get the money, barista - this customer's a con-man! He's actor Robert Glenister, who plays Ash in the TV series *Hustle*, pictured on set with one of Big Coffee's Lavazza-branded Piaggios.

Three-wheeled coffee operators have been making their presence felt elsewhere in the trade this month. A claim of 'the greenest mobile coffee franchise' has been made by the Lean Green Bean Machine of Derby, which has four tuk-tuks to start operating in London this month. Soko Coffee has won a 'Coffee Bar of the Year' prize for its three-wheeler at St Albans station, and a row in Cheltenham over plans by Chris Crichton to trade from a Piaggio coffee van in the town centre, because coffee is not 'an allowable food' under council rules, drew a flood of comments to the local paper - every one of them in support of the van.

World's greenest roaster is set for UK launch

The machine promoted as 'the greenest coffee roaster in the world' will be launched in the UK during the first week of October. It is the Kestrel 35 from the Loring Smart Roast company from California, to be distributed across Europe through a new company formed by Chris Glossop and Steve Penk, the men who set up La Spaziale UK.

An energy survey by Pacific Gas and Electric in the States has concluded that the Smart Roast system uses only 20 per cent of the energy required by a conventional roasting machine of a comparable size, and the target is to persuade coffee roasters to upgrade to a cleaner and more economical system.

Technically, there are major differences - in a conventional roaster machine, the drum rotates, which Smart Roast says is too energy-intensive. Instead, its drum is static and a paddle agitates the beans.

Smart Roast also says the conventional afterburner, used to burn-off particles in the exhaust to achieve cleaner emissions, is too expensive and can use six times as much fuel as

the bean roasting process itself. The new machine re-circulates its exhaust and burns off its own waste. There is also a claim that the machine works on a lower-oxygen basis than conventional roasters, and gives a distinct improvement in coffee taste.

It is also suggested that significant grants are available to assist in the purchase of such equipment.

The launch is at James' Gourmet Coffee roastery in Ross-on-Wye on 2,3,4 October. Places are by invitation, enquiries to 01246 454400.



Welcome to Britain's best news magazine for the coffee-house trade

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Meet Stumpy



Our recent stories on the flat white and other 'new' espresso-based drinks have drawn so much attention that we thought we ought to show you a 'stumpy'. Jorge Fernandez of Fernandez and Wells in Soho told us that this was the drink his baristas made for themselves, so they gave it a name and put it on the menu. In this small drink were originally 33gm of coffee - but they've now refined it slightly to just 28gm!

NEW!

The answer to the takeaway trade's big problem... see page 7!



The Scottish press says that Gordon Richardson, who founded the café chain Beanscene, is now taking court action to try and win some cash from the sequence of events last year in which his business was sold, then put into administration, and then bought from the administrator by the retailers Fifi and Ally. He is quoted colourfully in the Scottish press as saying: "I busted my balls for nine years building that company from nothing. It's a strong brand, I want my money back." The Sunday Herald has attempted to chart the history of the various deals, including the personalities and amounts involved, and even suggests that the current owners have not actually paid the purchase price - so Beanscene effectively remains in administration.

Tea is now being grown, for sale, in Wales. We know very little about Pembrokeshire Tea so far (we're waiting for samples) but we do know that the company has an enjoyably informal and unstuffy approach to what it does. Its basic blend is Emergency Tea, an all-purpose black, but another of its blends is named for Jemima Nicholas, a redoubtable woman who

repulsed the last foreign invasion on British soil - it was an attempt by the French in 1797, but Welsh village women led by Jemima the Great saw them off! The plantation even offers an 'adopt a tea-plant' scheme.

A café operator has pleaded guilty to fraud at York Crown Court. The Coffee Pot was sold to include six months remaining lease, fixtures and fittings - but the lease was non transferable, leaving the buyer with no business to run. The seller was fined £500, costs of £1,800, and ordered to repay the purchase price.

Greggs has just credited its £1.50 and £1.99 coffee-and-muffin deals as among the reasons for a rise in pre-tax profits, up seven per cent to £16.5 million. Chief executive Ken McMeikan, pointing out that some of his high-street competitors charge more for the coffee alone, made the interesting point that his coffee success has been built almost entirely on lunchtime trade - this spot brings in up to 70 per cent of his business, and he said that if wet weather stopped workers visiting him, he had no chance to win their business back that day.

Starbucks espresso now all-Fairtrade

Starbucks announced at the beginning of September that its British and Irish espresso is to go all-Fairtrade - its single-origin filter coffees will for the time being stay as a combination of certified and other coffees. However as the announcement was made, the Fairtrade Foundation came under criticism from British coffee roasters for increasing its paperwork demands.

In 2008, Starbucks bought 19 million pounds (nine million kilos) of certified coffee, about ten per cent of all global Fairtrade coffee, and this year it will double that to 40 million pounds. It will be the biggest buyer of Fairtrade coffee in the world.

Colman Cuff, chief coffee buyer for Starbucks, was in the UK and told *Coffee House* that he was not concerned about the doubts, often expressed, about the quality of most Fairtrade coffee.

"Over the last five we have dramatically increased the amount we buy. We have brought several new co-ops into Fairtrade - they were existing suppliers of ours, which is how we have managed to keep consistency of the blend and enough quantity."

One sour comment from a small British roaster was that if Starbucks were to go all-Fairtrade, there would be none left for anyone else.

"I don't believe it," replied Colman Cuff. "The amount of Fairtrade coffee out there is huge, and we have brought more in - we're not taking it off the table for everybody else."

Meanwhile, the Fairtrade Foundation did not please roasters with its working document on new requirements.

One small roaster, who asked not to be named, complained that as the administrative paperwork burden grows, the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation is also de-listing too many small growers for non-payment of fees, and thus Fairtrade is making life difficult for both ends of the chain at once.

"They are," he added, "going to disqualify many small roasters from working with Fairtrade at all. Big roasters may have the staff to handle the admin work - for the rest of us, this now gives the perverse situation of Fairtrade only wanting to work with little operators overseas, and big ones here."

Fairtrade did not respond to our request for a comment, but other roasters and importers did so.

"Any additional work when the goal posts are changed doesn't sit well," was a typical comment. "Does it create any additional benefit for us when we are paying for our membership? I don't think so. Any benefit for the producer at origin? I don't think so."

One importer confirmed that 'a lot of de-listing is going on', and added: "I agree that they are making things more and more difficult, but if we want to offer Fairtrade to our clients then we have no option. However, we believe that Utz Kapeh and the Rainforest Alliance are now gaining considerable ground on FLO."

Importer Simon Wakefield of DR Wakefield agreed that the requirements were more demanding, but pointed out that the plans published so far are only a consultation paper.

"Providing we can have a two-way conversation on this, we should be able to have a workable system - if the Foundation understand the problems their new regulations will cause, they may work with the roasters to simplify them. If they don't, then the trade can complain, with justification."

Fracino

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Mr Richard Healey

Richard Healey, founder of the independent tea importer Cotswold Teas, has died.

He launched Cotswold Teas in 2003, with the aim of bringing specialist teas to hotels, restaurants, tea-rooms and delis. He was an enthusiastic pioneer of the concept of tea-tastings in delis and cafes, and worked on a charmingly idiosyncratic basis - his business was often done on a narrow-boat on the midlands canals.

On many occasions he brought first-flush teas into the UK far ahead of anyone else, which he put down to his personal contacts with the growers. Those contacts were so close that he could ask them to do unorthodox things - it was Richard who once challenged his growers in Katmandu to make a blend which would 'cut through the taste of a traditional fried English breakfast'... and achieved it. The farmers actually learned how to cook such a breakfast, in order to help him. His wife Kay Healey has said: "I am determined to make a go of Cotswold Tea in his memory". Indeed, shortly after Richard's death, his Irish Breakfast tea won a Great Taste award.





The growing number of working women will be a major factor in the fortune of coffee shops, says the Key Note research organisation. The over-35 population is also increasing, meaning more people in the age group most likely to use coffee shops. However, coffee drinkers may prefer department store cafes over the obvious high-street venues.

The Key Note report makes a distinction between 'branded' coffee chains, which it identifies as about a dozen players, and independents. Key Note estimates that there are around 10,000 coffee shops in total in the UK and the Republic of Ireland; the 'branded' sector accounts for 30 per cent of these by number, and 35 per cent by sales value, from an estimated total turnover of £4 billion.

The researchers were surprised to find that only 19.6 per cent of respondents said that they tended to choose the major branded coffee or sandwich shops in preference to independents. A higher figure, 37 per cent, said that they tended to visit the cafes at super-

markets or department stores, rather than branded coffee shops.

Overall, 56.4 per cent of respondents visited a coffee shop in the previous year, but the proportion of 'heavy users', who visit several times a week, is now very low, at five per cent. Over half of those questioned said they would visit coffee shops more if prices were lower, causing Key Note to observe that operators might take up the strategy of 'credit-crunch lunch' deals, although at the risk of falling profitability.

The Key Note Coffee & Sandwich Shops, Sixth Edition July 2009. Enquiries: 020-8481 8750

Two suppliers have made early moves for their seasonal Christmas products. Byron Bay Cookies, working with Beyond the Bean, have devised their latest 'limited edition' cookie - following summer's successful clotted-cream-and-strawberry flavour, the plum pudding flavour has been created for Christmas. Use them as part of a seasonal meal-deal, suggests the company. (We've tried them - the taste is certainly distinctively identifiable). And Cherizena is the first to speak of its limited-edition Christmas coffee (pictured), created by flavouring a Colombian Exselsior bean with Jamaican rum, toasted pecan nuts, nutmeg, cinnamon spices and orange. We regret that we haven't had samples of this yet.



Frappes are dangerous, says WCRF

The beverage industry has been unimpressed by an announcement from the World Cancer Research Fund, which alleges that iced coffee drinks are a danger to health.

The WCRF says that 19,000 cancers a year could be prevented if Britons lost weight, and its science programme manager said: "The fact that there is an iced coffee on the market with over a quarter of a woman's daily calorie allowance is alarming."

The WCRF surveyed iced coffees on the high street, and reports that its 'chief offender' (a berry mocha frappuccino) had 561 calories, and the researchers claimed that even drinks made with the skimmed-milk option were too high in calories - one was described as 'more calories than a chocolate bar'.

The accusation drew wide international attention, and the beverage trade was not amused.

Costa said that an information breakdown of all drinks is available instore. Starbucks made its standard response, saying the researchers had only tried one drink out of 87,000 options. The inference of their responses was that their customers are intelligent enough to consider the calorie value of a drink.

Caffe Nero commented: "These

types of report are pretty silly. People come to us for a treat and therefore are happy to have some calories. Our lowest selling muffin by far is our reduced fat muffin - although people are always pleased to see it there, they then choose a full fat, tastier variety!"

The local press in Halifax has reported a contradictory attitude from staff put out of work by the closure of the Gaggia factory.

On the one hand, the paper quoted employees as saying they had known for some time that the company was in trouble - on the other, the staff reportedly then said that for the company to actually be shut down was a 'kick in the teeth'. Although it had been reported that the sale of Seaco, which makes Gaggia machines, to the Dutch electrical giant Philips would have no impact on the British operation, the Halifax factory closed almost immediately. News reports said that Gaggia UK had reported a loss of £520,000 for the year to March 2007, its last filed accounts.

A new idea in café business has cropped up in Tokyo. The L-Café, inside the Parco department store in Shibuya (the classy shopping district) is pioneering 'tryvertising'. Customers get a voucher with each purchase which entitles them to product samples - not just food and drink, but electrical equipment and appliances - even on home-loan tests. In return, they must fill out evaluations. It is, says the operator, 'the future of product research and consumer targeting'.

Esquires has responded happily to our suggestion that the chain is taking over Doncaster - it opened in the town's Frenchgate earlier this year, has a second store opening there now, and a third opening in the Wheatley retail centre. "By coincidence we had two franchisees who wished to open," said MD Peter Kirton. The local business community has observed that Esquires has created 26 jobs in the town this year.

PD Ports, a shipping freight company, has said that it is converting a 3,700 sq.m. warehouse at Teesport to handle a thousand containers of tea and coffee per year for Taylors of Harrogate.

Waitrose claims to have spotted a trend for better tea and coffee at home - the chain alleges that consumers are cutting down on high-street café visits, but that its bean sales are up 34 per cent, its 'fresh espresso coffee' (we assume roast-and-ground) is up 26 per cent, what it calls 'posh' teas up 48 per cent, and teapots up 54 per cent. The company avoided more detailed questions.

In one month, Coopers Coffee has won both Investors in People status and the northern Eaton Smith Business of the Month Award.

A neat promotional move has been made by Rodda's, the clotted cream company from the south west. For the Big South-west Cream Tea Week (19-25 Sept), in aid of the big regional appeal for the children's hospice, the manufacturer is donating free clotted cream to fundraising cream teas.

There must be something to be

gained from the promotional value of Chocolate Week, between 12-18 October... but the organisers have told us that they too are surprised that not one single drinking chocolate brand has asked to get involved.

Starbucks has failed in an attempt to open a cafe at York Station. The local planners said their proposed kiosk was: 'over-large, poor design, over-dominant signage and associated fabric barriers, and would form an incongruous and obtrusive feature which would detract from the quality and special interest of the Grade II listed building'.

Wicked Coffee of Wetherby has reported a 29 per cent increase in sales in the financial year 2008-09. The company is also now a national UK distributor for Lavazza.

The latest incidence of 'random acts of kindness' in drive-through coffee shops has occurred at the Steamini Bean in Blue Springs, Missouri. One woman told the cashier that she would also pay for the drink for the driver behind her - and the result was a chain of a thousand customers, lasting over a week, each accepting a drink from the one in front and paying for the one behind. Operator Garin Bledsoe told Kansas City TV that a week later the woman came back, was told what she had started off, and burst into tears.

Rachel Jones, who runs the Coco coffee bar in Haverfordwest, spent two whole days repainting and decorating her premises - and then heavy floods, which forced manhole covers off the town streets, covered the café in what she described as 'a mini tidal wave, three feet of stinking sewage water'. They lost equipment worth £10,000, including a £6,000 coffee machine and a fridge which floated away... but, with the help of neighbours and the emergency services, opened the next day. She said: "I felt gutted, but you either get it sorted or give up and go home - and home is not an option when you are self-employed."

Boughton's LIST

Boughton's List is the most independent and impartial guide to trade suppliers in the coffee-house trade - the only one to give a pen-picture of suppliers, and remain uninfluenced by the companies themselves!

See it at www.coffee-house.org.uk



Kaldi

Here is a wonderful extension of the concept of afternoon tea - it's based on the private supper club or 'underground restaurant' concept, not that Kaldi ever gets invited to such things. It is run by 'Lady Grey', who we suspect is an American cookery writer, at the Hidden Tea Room in central London... her own flat. On certain weekend dates through the year, just six 'guests' are entertained. Bookings are hard to get, at a cost of (we think) £25 a head, and the host-ess's well-regarded cupcakes can be bought as takeaways, a couple of quid a time. Lady Grey declined to tell Kaldi her beverage suppliers, referring only to 'some of the same as the Dorchester and the Ritz'. Expect to see this idea being copied, says Kaldi.

Tim Hortons, the giant Canadian coffee chain, was forced to withdraw the National Organisation for Marriage's first annual Marriage and Family Day. Gay organisations took this as prejudice, and threatened a massive national boycott campaign - Hortons hastily discovered its own policy of not supporting political issues, and claimed a get-out.

Malaysian authorities have confiscated 900 boxes of coffee laced with Viagra; a Kuala Lumpur company marketed it as 'an energy booster'.

Although the tabloids have taken an interest in the Usagi-to café in Japan, which charges 60p a minute to cuddle the in-house rabbits as a stress-relief service, it turns out that the service is not at all unusual over there - many cafes have their own cats and dogs to stroke. It seems that many homes don't allow pets, hence the popularity of the service. Kaldi's favourite is the BYOB service - 'bring your own bunny'.

A bizarre story from Vietnam suggests that the country has ambitions to become the 'holy land' for coffee, a

project supposedly backed by Professor Tom Cannon of the University of Liverpool, who has a reputation in economic creative-thinking circles. When Kaldi enquired, Prof. Cannon was surprised and said that he had merely commented, on a lecture tour there, why Vietnam was such a large producer and yet he never saw Vietnamese coffee on supermarket shelves here. Kaldi told him why.

Even more bizarre, and Kaldi has to steel himself to report it, is that Sayers in the north-west have begun serving cappuccinos with stencil toppings representing the 'celebrities' Peter Andre and his estranged model wife Jordan. Apparently customers select a topping according to which one they prefer... good grief. Kaldi has seen the etchings - very difficult to tell the difference - and did ask how they got the stencils, but no response.

The American press has, as you can imagine, been having a field day at the expense of Starbucks over the adoption of a time-and-motion man (and apparently he actually did use those words!) to show store staff how to work more efficiently. His main equipment is a Mr Potato Head toy, which staff have to put together in 45 seconds. The management-thinker remarks that thirty per cent of barista working time is in 'motion', which includes walking, reaching and bending. It seems he reckons that he can lower this element of the time spent in making drinks.

Many councils still unhelpful to coffee-shop owners

The regional newspapers continue to be full of stories of councils and their varying attitudes towards coffee shops. Although one council has been generous, others have been unsympathetic to cafe-owners.

A complaint about coffee saturation was made last month at the Business Forum in Westerham, Kent - with 14 coffee outlets in the town and another application in process, an objector calculated that if the new one won 10 per cent of local trade, two existing cafes would go out of business as a result.

In Huntingdon, the Greggs chain applied for exterior tables and chairs, but council engineers complained that this would cause extra pedestrian use on the rest of the pavement, causing it to wear out more quickly - the chief executive of the chamber of commerce called this objection 'bureaucratic red-tape nonsense'.

Barrow Borough Council says it has 'grasped the potential of café culture' and come up with a more helpful answer to the rows between planners and cafes over external seating. Operators pay a £50 application fee, the council places a public notice on the site for 28 days to allow any objections, does a site survey to assess problems, then gives a licence.

Darlington's council has decided to encourage a café culture, ruling only that outside furniture and barriers must be of acceptable quality, and has held the pavement-trading licence at £160 for a year.

A very curious story is reported in the Blackpool Gazette, which says that five cafes received compensation of £3,000 because they could not put their tables and chairs out while the controversial Brilliance lighting scheme (a kind of all-year illumination) was being installed.

Other traders complained that they too had lost business and been given nothing, but the council leader said the coffee houses had suffered more from the loss of external seating space.

By contrast, the owner of a tea room in Burwell, Cambridgeshire, says the local council made a 'very aggressive and not community-spirited' demand that she remove an A-board from outside the By Jove traditional tea room. The local paper reported that the operator, Tania Baker, then contacted the county council to apply for planning permission for the sign... and was told they had no procedure by which she could do so.

In a similar case, Janice Voce of the Fancy That tea shop in East Budleigh reported that trade had 'collapsed' since East Devon council ordered her to take two A-boards away, even though one was on a grass verge where nobody can walk. She told the local press that on one of the days following the order, she took just £8 and left the shop in tears.

In East Kilbride, the owners of the @the Diner internet café say they are in danger of being closed down, even though they sought advice from their local council on which licence to apply for. They told their local paper that they were assured that an A1 licence would cover them - but having opened, that the council then decided they needed an A3, and threatened closure.

(We recently reported the suggestion of a trade body which would support operators in such cases - we have no firm news for you yet, but we do know that moves are afoot).

Auto-froth now good enough for art?

A new claim for the standard of automatically-steamed milk has come from Rancilio, distributed here by the Coffee Machine Company. Its latest automatic steam wand, the Mk 2 i-Steam, is now said to produce a milk good enough to pour as latte art.

"We are using latte art simply to show that this produces frothed milk of very high quality," says the company. "We are not saying that anything can replace training, and we know that the barista scores by the ability to judge the milk as he is working on it... but we are showing that if you are busy at one end of the machine, and you need the i-Steam to work automatically for you at the other, it will give milk of a quality which you can then take and pour as art."



The pictured example was automatically frothed and then poured by Drury's barista trainer, Lynsey.

Boughton's Coffee House is the independent news magazine for the cafe, coffee-house, tea and coffee trades, and is published by Ian and Trudi Boughton.

**Tel: 01872 501050, mobile 07702-348866. ianb@coffee-house.org.uk
The news website is www.coffee-house.org.uk**

Wi-fi - yes, there is a way to make it work!

This magazine recently reported that there really is a way for coffee-house owners to make a free wi-fi service a practical and useful business proposition. Now, says the GotSpot organisation, is the time for operators to take advantage of the lessons which have been learned, and to use it as a risk-free business-builder... with a money-back guarantee if it doesn't work.

Read all about it at www.coffee-house.org.uk, and for a creative, sensible and practical discussion of how to make it work for you, call



0871 566 1416 or 0796 643 9822.
www.gotspot.co.uk
dave @ gotspot.co.uk



Tea-rooms and coffee houses are among the businesses pioneering a new waste-food scheme in Yorkshire, in an attempt to divert 600 tonnes of food scraps from landfill.

Rosie McTiernan, co-ordinator of the WhyWaste scheme, tells us that the system involves a separate wheelie bin, which will take food waste but also compostable items such as paper towels; the leftovers are mixed with garden waste and turned into agricultural compost.

The organisers say that most food-waste schemes do not cater for small businesses, the ones hardest hit by the rising cost of waste – however, the Yorkshire scheme may cost only £5 per collection.



Nancy Iribarren of the Organic House cafe in Hebden Bridge (pictured, centre) says that segregating food waste has caused no operational problem, and that the scheme is indeed saving her money.

The Coffee Republic uncertainty finally ended last month when the chain was sold by administrators to a surprise late bidder, Arab Investments, a property company known for its giant Pinnacle development in the City of London.

Around 120 bidders are thought to have expressed interest. The issue was confused right up the last minute, after franchisees applied to the administrator to consider their opposition to one likely bidder from the existing management, and then a consortium of existing management split into two competing bids. Arab Investments told *Coffee House* that work is already in hand to acquire new British sites. A spokesman said: "People ask if this is just an opportunistic move - it isn't. The owner really is interested in this."

Starbucks is reported to have hired a property company, CB Richard Ellis, to dispose of 50 unprofitable British sites. The magazine *Property Week* reported that, by contrast, Costa has plans to expand further.

Starbucks has protested that is still expanding in the UK, especially in different formats – it has opened a drive-thru in Cardiff and its two 'drive-to' sites, which are former Little Chef sites or similar. Costa's property director pointed to his 'meal deal' (a coffee and a panini for a set price of £4.95) as having set a new target in coffee-bar strategy, causing the property-trade magazine to comment that 'as more pubs and greasy spoons disappear, the winners could be the clever coffee shops that offer a combination that pub, greasy spoon cafe and traditional coffee shop did not'.

It has been widely said that Starbucks over-cooked the 'cannibalism' strategy, having too many stores close to each other. There has now been international questioning of its 'stealth' version of the same blanket strategy, by which it appears to be opening more cafes in central areas, but under different names. The chain opened up its 15th Avenue Coffee & Tea cafe in Seattle some weeks back, and will now follow it with Roy Street Coffee & Tea, in roughly the same area. The chain's president of global development sent a memo to staff on August 26, saying that he is 'off to a strong start in transforming the Starbucks store experience'. The new stores carry a small sign saying 'inspired by Starbucks'.

Twinings has been voted the number one hot beverage 'superbrand' in the U.K by the Centre for Brand Analysis. These 'superbrand' rankings do have a certain arbitrary nature to them, appearing to be voted for by a panel who act as 'arbiters of cool' before putting their selections out to a public vote.

In the Top 500 for 2009-10, Twinings has made 38, followed in the top hundred by Nescafe at 56, and then the first of only two high street coffee names, Starbucks, at 67, with PG Tips at 87 and Tetley at 96. Later, coffee figured through Douwe Egberts at 103, Kenco at 136, and Costa at 270. Ty-phoo appeared at 288, in front of Whittards at 295.

How meaningful are these ratings? In the Superbrands 'brands to watch in 2009', our only trade one was... Coffee Republic!

The mobile sector has provided the most notable performances in the early rounds of this year's Bev-e contest, we learn from the judges. "I have not had to reject a mobile espresso in 2009," reports the head judge. A full report is on the Coffee House website.



2009  **brasilia barista challenge**

The Brasilia Barista Challenge 2009 is aimed at rewarding and recognising shop Baristas. The competition has been designed to be light hearted, fun and relaxed and is open to anyone in England, Scotland and Wales. This is a great opportunity to show off your skills and the winner will be awarded with a trip to Brasilia's factory in Italy, plus a training session at their 9 Bar Barista Academy.

For full details & to enter please visit www.caffesociety.co.uk/bbc09 or call 0845 4500 500
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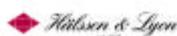
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Speed-dating and ethical debate in Vienna

It now appears quite likely that October's Allegra Coffee Summit in Vienna may turn up more talking points than even the last two Allegra events in London did – not least because Jeffrey Young's latest forum features the potentially explosive combination of a speech by one of the most direct opponents of Fairtrade, booked to speak on the topic of 'Why Fairtrade isn't Fair', followed by a debate among the various ethical organisations involved in coffee.

The main speaker on the subject, Peter Griffiths, is the man who wrote: "Fairtrade is extraordinarily successful at making wealthy westerners feel that they are warm, caring people. However there are a lot of reasons to doubt whether it is of much benefit to farmers in the Third World. It is argued, in fact, that it harms far more farmers than it helps." He has also accused the Fairtrade organisation of giving 'dishonest' replies to his criticisms, and has suggested that there are far more equitable ways to help the world's coffee farmers.

This will be followed shortly afterwards by an ethical debate, which will feature one speaker from the Fairtrade Foundation, but also participants from Utz Certified and Rainforest Alliance, both of which have extremely strong programmes based on good sustainable farming practice. They will be joined by the executive director of Coffee Kids, the organisation extremely popular within the coffee trade, started by a former green-coffee buyer to help farmers develop community-based projects which would alleviate their dependency on coffee alone.

There is expected to be wide interest in talks from Reinhold Schärff, head of the Schärff Group, who will speak on 'the connection between coffee and people - how to create the perfect in-store consumer experience', and from Nadine Beshire, the general manager of Cilantro Café, which was established in Egypt under the slogan of 'appetite for life' - it says that it offers its customers more than a seat and a coffee, it offers them a 'home'. The intriguing subject for Cilantro is 'from Cairo to London: a fresh approach to franchising in these difficult times'.

There will be a rare chance to hear one of the acknowledged world experts on espresso, Instaurator of Australia. Of his talk on 'the perfect espresso', he told us: "I guess in broad terms I will cover briefly a world view of varying espresso styles - Italy compared to Scandinavia, compared to Seattle, versus Australia and New Zealand."

Also speaking will be Jim Slater of



Jeffrey Young

Costa, Darcy Willson-Rymer of Starbucks, and others from Caffe Nero, and Cimbali.

A fascinating feature of the event will be something which has been used in restaurant and foodservice before, but not in coffee - a 'meet the buyer' opportunity. In this, something over 70

buyers are expected to have registered, and they get to hear one-on-one presentations from suppliers in a day of individual meetings - in practice, one side

sits at a table, and the other side constantly moves around. It is, Jeffrey Young of Allegra agreed, like speed-dating - on caffeine!

"There is nothing like this dedicated to the beverage sector. The idea that people want to meet this way is quite clear, and it has been encouraging to see them coming together. Buyers are coming because they want to be here, and because they're looking for innovation."

They are also looking for answers, says Young.

"Companies' expectations of anything in this financial climate are high, and it is healthy to have forums for business leaders to learn, inspire, discuss and debate.

"In difficult times, people ask more questions, and that's healthy. There is a big gap in the market for insight into such a highly-fragmented business sector, and we can see a big thirst for knowledge throughout the beverage industry."



As the UK looks forward to its biggest promotional year in speciality coffee, with the world barista finals coming to London in 2010, we discover several players already getting prepared...



The new star of takeaway 'super-brands' has also become the first high-street chain name to get involved in plans for Britain's greatest-ever coffee year. It is Krispy Kreme, the coffee-and-doughnuts chain which was a surprise 'new entry' at 68 in this year's Superbrand ratings.

The brand is now the first to commit itself to entering its in-house barista winner for the UK championships.

This is a strategic move, says Krispy Kreme's Lee Leadbetter - the chain wants to be seen as a 'destination' name of choice for takeaway coffee, and promoting its in-house barista champion to the public will be practical advertising of its coffee standards.

"Customers will see our people wearing t-shirts, aprons and badges showing how well they are trained; there will be promotion of the fact that our baristas are competition-standard, and there will be posters asking our customers to rate the Krispy Kreme coffee experience, using reply-paid postcards. Our champion will be promoted in front of the public, and will wear a special uniform."

The Krispy Kreme contest is being supported by Drury Coffee and Rancilio espresso machines.

A good example of seeing opportunities to get the coffee-drinking public interested in our big year has come from Edgcomb's, the beverage merchant in Arundel.

Alice Edgcombe-Rendle tells us: "My feeling is that we need to raise awareness among the public. I will be preaching the word in my local press and local food magazines, all of which promote good practice in food production, and one in particular is already interested in featuring this."



And she adds, she has speaking engagements set to local business-women - and promotion of good coffee will be part of her talk!

A big name returns to the world of competition

Caffe Society of Leeds, distributor of Brasilia espresso machines, is to encourage the everyday high-street coffee house barista to feel part of the great year of 2010, with a relatively casual and fun barista championship. .. but with encouragement to take part in the big UK event.

Caffe Society says its event is not intended to detract from the main UK contest, but is for those who may not previously have considered themselves up to national competition standard. The contest is to be a 'relaxed and fun' affair, which will allow all baristas to underline their pride in doing a skilled job, and of course their coffee-houses can promote the fact that they are taking part. Ideally, the experience will encourage them to take part in the national UK contest, which is both a great learning experience and a useful promotional opportunity for cafe operators.

The new event carries the name of Brasilia - and, of course, up to 2003, the previous importer of those espresso machines held a very well-regarded annual barista contest, a pioneer event in the British coffee trade. It did feed into the world championships, and got a fifth in 2000 with Thomas Polti.

In the Caffe Society/Brasilia event, participants will be invited to produce espressos and cappuccinos, from a coffee supplied to them, and a hot chocolate drink. In the final, entrants can choose any number of five single-origin coffees to blend as they wish, and then produce espressos and cappuccinos.

There will also be a knowledge quiz and an espresso race.

Regional heats will begin in October and be held in Leeds, Peterborough, Uxbridge, Bristol and Motherwell.

Great chance for independents, says WBC chief

With the 2010 finals now set for London, the executive director of the world championship, Cindy Chang, is now based in the UK.

Cindy Chang sees an opportunity for even the smallest UK coffee-houses to take part in the year of the world finals.



"The WBC is a mission about bringing speciality coffee to the public. I believe that it is through coffee shops and baristas, those who make the drinks everyday, that we can spread the message about the quality of the great coffee that is in place in this country.

"And I think the smaller coffee shop can get a bigger impact from this than the corporate ones. The independents have an interaction with their customers which gives every barista the chance to show that they care about coffee.

"It does us no good at all to put in all this energy and effort, if we keep it all within the trade. I hope that Gwilym's success, winning the world title from a cart, will prove to all coffee shop operators and customers that it isn't just the fancy shops who do it well!"

The full interview is on our website



The western coffee-house chain Coffee#1 has got its baristas in the mood for the coming year with an in-house latte art contest followed by a public tasting session.

In the art contest, a dozen staff competed, and Liina Nutman took first place with her fire-breathing dragon (pictured). "The judges reckoned six of our people would have held their own in the national contest," said managing director James Shapland. "At a time when justifying £2 a cup is getting more difficult, these things become more important." In the evening, Coffee#1 presented a tasting evening for customers, featuring a video of growing areas in Costa Rica.

The biggest problem of the takeaway trade -

solved!



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True 'exotic' coffees are within the reach of the coffee-house operator - for the imaginative operator willing to develop a menu of occasional coffees, it is possible to buy in small quantities which will not break the bank, and sell at extremely satisfying prices in the cup.

The source is the trio of Peter de Bruyne, John Sherwood and Guy Wilmot, who make up two separate companies - Blue Mountain Coffee and the sister company Sea Island Coffee.

The Jamaican interest is a long-standing one - they acquired one of the most famous coffee businesses there thirteen years ago, and are one of only two registered importers of Blue Mountain to Europe. That coffee is well-known - but some of the items under the Sea Island catalogue are astonishing.

"The principle behind Sea Island was to find unusual coffee with a story to it - ideally, from an island. It follows that there is unlikely to be very much development on an island.

Not even the islands are conventional - Ethiopia qualifies for Sea Island through the Lake Tana Monastery Island coffee. It was these monks who first brewed a beverage from the fruit brought to them by a goatherd - or, if you prefer, who received coffee from

True 'exotic' coffees come within reach



Peter de Bruyne

The high-ticket coffee menu is within the reach of any specialist coffee-house, say the Sea Island men



John Sherwood

the archangel Gabriel. In another legend, it is where the Holy Grail was supposed to be kept.

"The monks there believe they were the first ones to start developing coffee," confirms Peter de Bruyne. "I think 'gamey', with fruit and chocolate in it."

Several of the origins do have coffee traditions going back a long time, and some operations are so small that the partners have had to send them hand-pulping machines. "Where there has been a past tradition of coffee, we are quite prepared to help re-establish coffee industries, in the knowledge that the first result may be undrinkable - but we know that it will develop."

Hawaii is a known coffee source, but the Sea Island Maui Mokka is very

unusual, says John Sherwood. "Tiny wee round beans, with a very exotic taste, and at one time they would have been rejected as over-fermented... now micro-roasters talk of their 'wonderful fruitiness!'"

St Helena, the island on which Napoleon was exiled, is genuinely rare.

"St Helena has never produced more than a tonne in a year, so we are talking about very limited quantities," explains de Bruyne. "Our Guy Wilmot spent two months in St Helena working with them, and it's not easy to get there - fly to the Cape, take a boat for four days. Not that different from travelling a hundred years ago!"

"They've abandoned the idea of tourism and an airport, and although it's not a poor island, there is very little for a young and energetic population to do. We now have an arrangement with the governor there. So we've been pushed to resuscitate the coffee industry there, and we expect a crop within a year. This is new work, replanting an industry.

"St Helena coffee is creamy and understated with a beautiful smoothness. It's not a powerful coffee, we call it 'a bag full of fruit'. And there is a wonderful story to it - it's the Napoleon Valley estate."

New Caledonia, a Melanesian island, has what the partners consider a true secret - a pointed Bourbon bean, with half the caffeine of other beans. Only a thousand kilos are grown each year.

"This is actually a part of the EU, as a department Francaise... if you go to the Elysee Palace, you will get this coffee," remarks de Bruyne. "And the rest of it comes to us!"

Are such exotic coffees a novelty - or is it practical for the street-level catering trade to deal in them?

"In countries such as Russia, Belgium and Italy, they use 'coffee menus'. And restaurants in Japan specifically look for exotic coffees, as the affordable luxury at the end of the meal. Restaurants in the UK don't buy exotic coffee, and they don't buy fresh coffee - but, in a certain number of high-end restaurants and hotels, there is that same interest in the 'affordable luxury'. In Moscow, at the top of the menu, we've seen Kopi Luwak at \$50 a cup.

In Belgium, we've seen the coffee menu beautifully presented in what appears to be a cigar box, with coffee in little pockets, the way some hotels present their teas.

"If the bright hotel or restaurant were to put on an exotic coffee menu, they would achieve interest. A coffee menu really will put you into another sphere of beverages."

The cost, say the Sea Island partners, is not as high as might be expected - because, these being rare coffees, the caterer buys them in what might otherwise be considered surprisingly small quantities. They go on a menu as precisely that - rare coffee, available only until it runs out, maybe promoted as a special for a weekend or a week, at a high price for a serving through a cafe.

"This is not a question of replacing your normal coffee, but supplementing it... and where too many caterers waste time trying to claw pennies off a kilo of everyday coffee, the difference per cup between that and truly great coffee is minimal.

"But there is a big difference in the selling price."

Thai Arabica arrives in Dorset

A new and unusual origin is about to be offered to the trade - it is Thai coffee from the Doi Chaang company, of which the first 35 bags have arrived for roasting at the Dorset Coffee Company.

The coffee is grown by 8,000 hill farmers from the Akha tribe. A Canadian operation has already been set up to market the coffee, and has 'gifted' half of its company back to the farmers, and an infant British company is now in place. Efforts so far have brought electricity, health care, and a small school to the area, and a coffee 'academy' has been established.

The coffee is a high-grown Arabica, naturally low in caffeine, shade grown under fruit trees and washed in spring water. The editor consulted the DR Wakefield company, whose Alok Vohora confirmed: "the northern part of Thailand does grow some very decent Arabica."



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First commercial roasting begins in the deep south-west

For the first time, coffee is being commercially roasted in Cornwall. In an area where so many caterers are fiercely proud of showing that they prefer to loyally source all menu items from within their own county, this is a very significant move.

Origin Coffee, from a tiny village near Falmouth, has already been behind blends which have been used by Jamie Oliver's restaurants and Hugo Hecod, the 2008 barista champion. Now, with a 12-kilo Diedrich and a one-kilo Probat, MD Tom Sobey and roaster Phil Gevaux (himself a UK latte art champ) have turned to a 'seasonal' strategy.

Origin's main such brand is In Season, described as 'a malleable, seasonal blend of coffee for hardened drinkers'. This means that while the main characteristic of the espresso stays the same (buttery, sweet flavours with a touch of fruit, a big, creamy body) the actual recipe changes according to what's 'in season'.

"As our company introduction to roasting, we roasted every single estate we had, to medium and darker," explains Tom Sobey. "Every one of us then blended small amounts, and gave our blends to each other to taste. The In Season blend came out of that - maybe we were lucky, but it hasn't been tweaked since!"

The company is working on development and learning.

"Our better customers drive us forward. We're being driven to research freshness - we're working on a project to roast coffee, pack it in Hessian sacks, and observe the de-gassing. It's a project to understand and control the progress of roasted coffee.

"We've had other very interesting learning experiences... such as leaving roasted coffee in an unheated store-room in the winter, finding it frozen, and working out what happened to it!"

Other recent projects have included devising an African house coffee for Jika-Jika, the new coffee-house in Bath run by rugby internationalists. The result is brewed in an unusual way - the company has built a three-unit Aeropress station.

Development of restaurant coffee in the south-west is a pet project for Origin.



Origin's MD (right) has to unload his own sacks, ready for 'bean-baker' Phil Gevaux

"Everybody says that restaurant coffee in general is no good. That's not quite right - we are already making great coffee available to restaurants.

"What I would like to do for the Cornwall Food and Drink Festival (Truro, 25-27 September) is to provide the Magnificent Seven, the seven leading chefs in Cornwall, with some very special coffees.

"I do believe that a key to the progress of speciality coffee is getting the attention of the chefs - if the coffee is on a chef's menu, he's putting his name to it, so he has to take an interest.

"To get chefs excited about coffee may be the first big step in the development of gourmet coffee in the UK."

With typical irreverence, Origin does not have a 'roastmaster'. Phil Gevaux has been handed the title of 'bean-baker'!

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How does a takeaway operator go about choosing the right cup for his operation? Well, says Solo's managing director Tony Waters, don't start with the cup!

"Cups are a means to an end, and as such, they're a long way down your decision process. I have seen lots of suggestions of how café owners should make their decisions about cups - and really, I would start somewhere else!

"The primary thing, before cups, is to understand who your target customer is, and who your actual customer is. Now, a lot of cafe owners say they know who their customers are, and that's good.

"But you still have to take the time to sit back and say - OK, what can I learn from this? And, indeed, which of my customers, because of their expenditure patterns, keep my business going?

"Then ask yourself - what is it that I do which appeals to these people? Why do they come to me? And don't be afraid to ask them! It is often much more useful to be able to analyse your success than to worry about your mistakes - because, if people do like your food or your coffee, then it's important to understand why.

That's your starting-point - and only

Takeaway strategies



John Young

Two of the most influential company leaders in the takeaway cup market, Tony Waters and John Young, tell the beverage trade that there is more promotional use in their products than meets the eye



Tony Waters

then, you think 'what part do my takeaway cups play in all this?'"

Cups by themselves are just a functional product, says Tony Waters. But there is something that many people do not think about.

"One of the things which is under-used is the understanding that these things get taken to places where there are other potential customers.

"So, think about what you learned from what your existing customers like about you... and whatever it is, put it on the cups for other potential customers to see!"

This is not necessarily just a logo. That may not be enough.

"You will see suppliers suggest that you use cups to 'match your brand'. Well, a brand on a cup is just pride,

unless it has a meaning. Costa is big enough to just put its name on its cups - but if you are in a high street competing with other brands, you are going to need more than a name... you're going to need to say something. The business schools call this 'positioning', but I call it 'appealing to customers!'"

The best examples of this are seen on the continent, suggest Tony Waters - there, more takeaway operators have the knack of conveying the character and atmosphere of their business on a cup design.

Then, he says, there are other ideas.

"You can certainly promote to try and win new customers, but also bear in mind what you will want to do to keep them.

"You can have prize competitions, you can promote a free cake with a coffee, and you can promote your Fairtrade interests. You can do something to make cups 'collectable'.

"And there's the question of subsidised cups - that is, selling the advertising space on your cups. The mainstream market hasn't gone for this yet, but it's an idea which has a future.

The important thing is - nobody has yet used cups as part of a concerted, planned, overall campaign."

However, observes Tony, the British seem rather reticent about such things - so the operator to step in first might be at an advantage.

Be wary, he says, of novelty ideas for the sake of it.

"In our plans and ideas for next year, we have looked at known business problems, and are preparing products which will make café operators think 'right, now I can do that'.

"We are looking at innovative answers to business problems, not just cup-design gimmicks.

"Technical ideas are quite possible - the Hortons 'roll up the rim' format from Canada is possible, no problem with it. The peel-off idea, which McDonalds use, is not difficult, nor is the heat-and-reveal.

"But the point is this - good tactics start with a business need, not just a nice novelty idea."

At a recent beverage summit, the MD of Huhtamaki, John Young, made it perfectly clear - the British takeaway beverage trade would not have got anywhere near the business it has, had it not been for the expertise of the disposable cup makers.

We suggested to him that cup manufacturers are seen as a necessary evil rather than a useful ally.

"This may not be seen as the sexiest product on the earth, but look at the figures and you will appreciate the staggering importance of it to the trade.

"I enjoyed speaking to the Allegra summit inasmuch as I tried to deliver the point that without our product, the coffee market explosion would not have achieved the volume it did.

"I had one guy in the audience say afterwards that his business had expanded greatly on the back of 'a good quality printed cup'.

"We do a great deal of work with Costa, and they have a sustained programme of development based around coffee-to-go, and they see the cup as pivotal to a dynamic growth.

"There is no doubt about this - the cup is the great vehicle for the message, and we are in development stage with something which will offer a great deal in imaging and messaging. It was inspired as a consequence of the question: 'what is the next generation of takeaway cups - is it promotional, environmental, or what?'"

"Like the Nescafe heat and reveal idea, there are ideas we can enhance. The McDonalds peel-off sticker, which



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The MD of Tri-Star packaging, Kevin Curran, has created what is described as a 'unique new vehicle for advertisers', the Communicup. As we understand it, the advertiser creates the promotional design on the cup, which is then made available to takeaway caterers in the area where the campaign is running. It sounded to us very similar to what Tabletalk Media do, on both static tables and takeaway cups - 'yes it's something we do do - so, not so unique, I guess!' came the good-natured response from Tabletalk's Lloyd Keisner.



wasn't ours (although we do a lot of their international work) was a good idea."

So, should takeaway cups be bought as a commodity or as an asset?

"Sometimes, the more 'aggressive' buyers in the trade do actually come to appreciate the value of the product - but they still don't wish to pay the price for what it delivers!

"You wouldn't believe the battles we have on 'commercial positioning', and it's not as if we're making outrageous demands - but considerable added-value does come at a price. If the number of things this product can do were embraced more fully, the takeaway cup would be seen as a great asset to the trade.

"It's very sad that these things are bought as commodities and not with appreciation or understanding."

As a prize in a current trade contest, café operators get to go round the Huhtamaki site in Gosport. This is a chance to put across appreciation of cups, says John Young.

"I look forward to operators appreciating the technology which goes in to what they think of as a cheap throw-away item.

"As an industry, we and the caterers both have consumers who leave a cup on their desk for 30 minutes and expect it to remain an acceptably-hot drink. We also have both traders and consumers who expect ever-larger sizes of drink, which places technological demands on us - larger sizes of drink have required stronger cups and a different 'hoop' strength, which is the flexing strength of the cup. The fabric flexes one way with a lid, another way without, and the rim plays a part as well. These are issues which are important.

"And don't forget that lid - this plays a key role. It's true that there are some very good ones, and it's true that there are some which are hellishly expensive, which is an example of the better product having its price.

"Sometimes the buyer's focus stays too much on the cup, but the lid is still critical. There are still a lot of customers who buy our cup and somebody else's lid, or vice-versa, and while that may technically work, if you get to a spillage or burn case, then who has ownership of the problem? In a world of claims issues, the precision of cup and lid is critical."

We have heard of a new Detpak product, for which we are not yet given details - this is Vivo, apparently a kind of print to be used on ripple-wrap cups... but we have as yet to dig up any firm information on it.

There is now a proven demand for used takeaway cups – paper mills cannot get enough of them.

Barry Read of the Paper Cup Recycling Group, whose activities we have reported on closely for some time, tells us that the group has now finished a trial in which virtually all the fibre from polyethylene-coated paper cups was successfully extracted, then converted into high-quality tissue fibre for use in products such as facial and toilet tissues.

The paper mill involved was so pleased with the quality of fibre that it asked about the chances of receiving at least 10 tonnes of used cups each month.

"This is really exciting," he told us. "I don't know how many tonnes of cups have been passed through to our mill partners, but a 20-tonne load of suitable recovered paper cups each week would be no problem! Estimates suggest that somewhere between 70,000 and 100,000 tonnes of paper cups are used each year and recovering 20 per cent of that would not present any problem when reprocessing."

However, the majority of takeaway cups will never reach such a constructive end, which is why the industry is so concerned with first, making the things from sustainable materials, and second, making cups which can be composted or which will bio-degrade at the end of their life.

Unfortunately, this now means that many cup salesmen repeat the words 'biodegradable' and 'compostable' like a mantra, without knowing what they're talking about, we complained to Marcus Hill, managing director of London Bio-packaging.

His company operates a 'closed loop' system, by which customers are helped to keep waste in the correct bins to operate a pure compostable waste stream. He collects the compostable waste on a regular basis and takes it to a commercial composting facility.

"Our cups are made from certified sustainable forest paper lined with NatureWorks Ingeo bio-plastic. This means the cup has a lower carbon footprint, as bio-plastics emit less carbon when made than the oil-based lining on conventional cups.

London Bio-packaging also made its own 'ripple' cup, a popular handling format but one not normally recyclable. "Ours have a conventional PE lining so cannot be composted, but they are made from sustainable forest paper and can be recycled. We are currently developing our bio-plastic lined ripple cup and hope to launch it this winter."

Planglow has also created its own

Biological battles

One of the biggest debates of all in the takeaway cup sector is the question of environmentally-friendly materials, waste and recycling. A lot of nonsense is spoken - but a lot of good work is also being done.



A ripple, but not as we know it - Planglow's new Bio-cup

variation on the 'ripple' cup, and although this is described as 'an eco-alternative to Detpak', the company which established the ripple format, Planglow is still happy to distribute the original.

"The Detpak Ripple-wrap is a great cup and customers do like it," says Rachael Sawtell of Planglow.

"However, we were increasingly being asked by our customers for a

100-per-cent bio cup – all of our other products are biodegradable and compostable, and we needed a cup to fit with the range.

"The new cup we are offering offers the best of both worlds as it has ridges, but not pronounced ones. This means that the print is clear and you also get the benefits of a double walled cup. Images become much clearer, particularly if photographic imagery or wording is used. We already have a number of customers that are changing over."

The cups are made from card with a PLA lining.

Will the cups actually get to the right waste stream?

"The truth of the matter is that the majority of food-to-go packaging waste will end up in landfill as unless there are kerbside facilities, no one is going to carry their used takeaway

Continues on next page

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continued from previous page

cups or empty sandwich packaging around with them until they get home.

"However, we do have more and more customers that have their own composting facilities, such as schools and universities, and therefore we believe our products do offer a better solution."

Both Planglow and London Biopackaging have also done work on the environmentally-acceptable lid, and both have discovered that to date, compostable cup lids from bio-plastic have been too brittle. LBP has turned to a lid from Ingeo bio-plastic that is heat-resistant and flexible, and made from corn.

However, the biggest claim for the new kind of lid comes from Vegware, which says the answer is now here.

Vegware was the first to launch a fully compostable hot drink cup lid from PLA, derived from corn starch, and when it did so, it said that such lids should be handled carefully when being applied to the cup. This, agreed the company, was a worry in the practicalities of a fast-food operation. But things have moved on, says Vegware.

"That instruction did apply to early versions of the lid. Many of our customers felt the extra care was worth taking, and enjoyed the product - however, we now have a new updated

material and have started shipping lids made from this version. The lids are now much more supple, and have no practical limitations compared with plastic.

"The new lids truly are a fantastic product!"

(Corn-starch products do have a natural flex - Vegware's knives and forks are said to flex far more and break less than the plastic disposable alternatives).

It's all very well to say a cup is compostable, but that relies on the right disposal after use? What can Vegware, a company dedicated to compostable products from sustainable sources, do to ensure that these things are disposed of properly?

"Be assured, organics recycling is going to become mainstream over the next few years," replied the company's Lucy Frankel confidently. "It's all a

What is the difference between biodegradable and compostable?

The Solo Cup interpretation is: 'biodegradable' means it will eventually disappear by itself into a grass verge. 'Compostable' means it needs an industrial, controlled facility. Biodegradable products will compost - but 'compostable' products will not necessarily bio-degrade.

question of the infrastructure catching up with the materials - a classic example of each side feeding off the other. It's hard to make an argument for investing in commercial composting plants until there's a ready supply of raw material, and of course people question the point of organics recycling if there's no infrastructure in place. Luckily, the landfill directive, where the fee rises £8 per tonne every year, is on our side!

"We are working closely with the commercial composting industry to set up collections of mixed food and packaging waste. After successful trials, these are now available nationwide.

"We accept it's harder to manage proper disposal in a high-street retail environment, but there are all kinds of places where the system can work very well, such as offices, schools, universities, workplace canteens, shopping centre food halls, airports, and stations. There, compostable packaging and disposables can be thrown away together with food waste and then collected for composting.

"If our eco products are simply thrown away with general waste, then at least the first stage of their life was much greener than their plastic equivalents. Even if they end up in landfill, their carbon footprint is still lower."

Astonishingly, nobody in the cup

trade has yet published research on the heat qualities of compostable cups with corn starch linings.

"Although we have no data on this yet, we use a heavier weight board than most manufacturers. Our personal qualitative experience says that they work well at coffee temperatures, though a sleeve is a good addition if tea is made directly in the cup with freshly boiled water.

"Compostable double-wall cups are on the way - the problem is finding a compostable adhesive to join the two parts together."

Kraft rewards recovery

Kraft Foods is to bring to the UK a scheme devised with the American recycling charity TerraCycle, which sets up arrangements to reclaim food packaging, send it for the manufacture of new products, and pay a 'reward' to charities nominated by collectors.

In the US, Terracycle has five million volunteers, has reclaimed a billion items of packaging and passed about £62,000 to charity. Here, the idea is that Kenco and Tassimo refill packs will be collected from 'pre-defined locations', with a payment of 2p per item. It starts in domestic products - but, we are told, there will be a UK foodservice version in due course.



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The Taylerson survey this summer showed that a remarkable number of British consumers, more than had been previously thought, have tried flavours in their coffee. Over the next three pages, we hear the ideas of several of the imaginative flavour-makers

The flavoured-syrup market is made up of a half-dozen or so brands who fight the market extremely competitively. And most trade distributors carry only one branded syrup, which has made it very awkward for cafe operators who actually want to taste and compare different brands.

What is not generally known is there actually is a trade wholesaler who specialises in flavours and, extremely unusually, carries full ranges of at least six brands – it is Jonathan Money of Cream Supplies, part of his Catering and Leisure company of Emsworth in Hampshire (and very entertainingly, a sister company of his Erotica Cream company).

Not only does he carry six main ranges, he does at competitive prices, about which he is defiant.

"I've always thought that syrups are often overpriced for something which is largely water and sugar – this is not 15-year-old whisky we're talking about. So I like to set a price which I think correct... which does sometimes annoy people."

With such a large range, how does he respond to the obvious question,

Flavoured syrups - the overhead view

from customers who say: 'which is the better vanilla - Monin or Routin?'

"Yes, I do have a favourite, but I'm not going to say what it is. But it is reasonable to say that there are some syrups you buy for the palate, and others which you use when the customer says 'I don't want to have to think about this - just pick me one which is reliable, and works'.

"However, there are some opinions I am happy to give. A common one is about syrups curdling milk, and some products are prone to that.

"We also like to give opinions on commonsense hygiene - I see some big chains now use stickers on their cream whippers, saying when the cream went in, and a similar hygiene



regime for syrups is vital.

"We also advise on what some customers think is mould, but isn't - there's a goo which forms in some natural fruit flavours, and you can safely remove it by shaking the bottle.

It's also true that a high natural fruit flavour probably has the shortest life of any syrup, and on the one hand this is a 'plus' in quality, but on the other it reinforces the idea that you do have to store these things properly... and that's the kind of advice we're happy to give."

There are several curiosities about his range - one new arrival is Giffard, a French-made flavour which Jonathan discovered by sheer chance when swapping notes with a barman in

Germany. "It's a pretty mixologist-specific brand, and it's natural flavours and hundred-per-cent cane sugar. Nobody's tried to sell them as coffee flavourings before."

His overview extends to flavour trends. What should the cafe operator be looking out for?

"It's true that gingerbread can go crazy, but ginger as such is a weird product – one customer will take a case and the next can't use it at all. I was nervous about taking bubblegum on as a flavour, but it keeps selling out - it goes for milkshakes, but I wouldn't try it in coffee! Toffee and toffee-crunch have started going well.

"But the big story of the year is sugar-free syrups - two years ago I was going to discontinue them, but now sugar-free products are at parity with anything else.

"Sales of sugar-free vanilla are now just as much as 'standard' vanilla.

"One brand did tell me that they never get asked for it, and I told them I sell bucket loads of their competitors' sugar-free products... now they supply an entire sugar-free range!"



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Sheldon's Southern Comfort

The founder of the Italian Beverage Company, Sheldon Flax, has a claim to being the first person to promote flavours in the UK for coffee use - and curiously, his company now offers two, the well-known Da Vinci from the States, and his own Simply.

"Sheldon Flax was the first person to import flavours seriously," confirms operations director Philip Rundlett. "He saw Da Vinci sold by a cart trader abroad, brought them here, and instigated a revolution in taste awareness. Flavours are a great opportunity to upsell, and I know that sales of coffee went up at one high street department store café because they offered a free flavour shot."

There is great debate and argument about the manufacture of syrups. Several competing brands have been made by the giant Kerry corporation from the States, and European factories make for other labels as well as their own - and essentially, nobody will admit to who makes what. As a result, there is always suspicion that two bottles with different labels may have come off the same production line.

Does it harm the market that there is so much secrecy about where these things are made?

"Yes, in that it raises questions about who one competes with! Da Vinci is still a global leader, huge in the States, but now it is also made here in Worcestershire... and so is one of the other British brands.

"Our Simply brand is made in the UK, but not there! Ours is made in a factory which works to our specification and does not produce for any other brand."

Part of the argument against syrups from giant brands is a suspicion over manufacturing processes - typically, such lovely items as 'animal charcoal'.

"Yes, one reason we do not have Simply made by another brand is because of methods which some people find questionable," replies Rundlett. "Both Simply and Da Vinci are OK for vegans, Da Vinci is kosher, and Simply is made with no alcohol in it for flavour suspension, which means we export vast amounts of it to the Middle East.

"We do use preservatives - because a flavour, sitting above an espresso machine, could go off. Brands which do not use preservatives are supposed to be stored in a fridge, but how are you going to do that in a busy café bar? The potential for bug-growth in a coffee shop, where it is extremely difficult to be perfectly health-conscious, is so high that we decided to make our product as natural as possible, but with a preservative."



Philip Rundlett with the 'Southern Comfort' look - look at the ridges on the bottle shoulders!

The suggestion that IBC uses two brands on a 'better/best' strategy is met with derision.

"No! The factors affecting a choice of syrup are: what looks good on the shelf, what tastes good, what is value for money, and what doesn't go off. I say ours is better than the majority. I would put Simply as one of the best on the market - it will stand up against anything. And look at our new bottle - it's the 'Southern Comfort' look.

"It is not a good-better strategy, it's a 'good versus good' strategy, and the reason it is not strange is because so much personal taste comes into play in this sector."

So how does a café operator choose between syrups? There is a tip in making comparisons, says IBC.

"You can taste and compare in the finished coffee, but we prefer not to - a syrup will taste different in a Starbucks coffee from a Costa coffee, so better to take the coffee element out. We taste flavours in milk, because it is a good neutral carrier. You steam the milk to latte temperature, and add the flavour in the exact measure stated by the supplier... then compare.

"We believe you really should do this, and take time to search for the best of the best - because we've tasted commercial flavours we wouldn't give to the dog!"

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A standard piece of marketing by flavours companies is to put forward ideas and recipes for speciality and signature drinks – but do coffee-house operators want them, and do they use them?

One syrup manufacturer which is very keen on the practical uses of flavours in imaginative menu items is Monin, the French brand whose menu expert Alex Lapierre is often seen in the UK giving demonstrations. Indeed, Olivier Monin himself has said: "we don't sell syrups any more, we sell applications".

This, acknowledges the British importer, Bennett Opie, means that they have to be more than syrup box-shifters - they are expected to be suppliers with creative ideas.

"There are great similarities between the UK cocktail movement, and the relatively new interest in inventive coffee in the UK," says the company. "What has worked so well in increasing cocktail sales is also working within the coffee sector. Signature cocktails have worked, so why not signature coffees? Explain what it is, get them to try it. Once you turn your customers into experts, they tell everyone about their favourites."

Monin recently came up with a very British signature item.

An apple pie or crumble is the best-selling dessert in British pubs - the pub-trade paper mentioned this to Monin recently, and Alex Lapierre came up with a coffee version. He used 15ml caramel sauce, 20ml apple syrup, and a single espresso - he put the caramel in a tall glass, steamed the apple with the milk, and poured gently into the glass to achieve a layer. He gently added the espresso, and topped with a little more caramel sauce and an apple garnish, with biscuit crumbs.

Café operators do like these ideas, says Beyond the Bean, the creator of Sweetbird.



Alex Lapierre

Sweetbird, the brand conceived by Beyond the Bean a few years ago, has been establishing itself as a familiar name among trade suppliers. It cultivates a quite deliberate wacky image with the character of the little Woodstock-bird, and makes available a quite vast number of recipe ideas, all enthusiastically made up by the company staff, with accompanying point-of-sale pieces.

"We have sent out just under 12,000 pieces of syrup point-of-sale in the last year and they do seem to be enormously popular with independent cafes and some small chains," reports general manager Terry Osborn. "In addition we have done some work on custom POS with larger customers and have seen demand of even minor flavours like blueberry take off as result."

"From our experience, customers who use POS and keep it fresh and clean, will benefit from increased product sales. Of course the main benefit to cafes who are making a feature of their syrup range especially through signature drinks, is the loyalty they gain if their customers perceive the customised drink as being only available in 'their' cafe."

Pixie-dust, water-springs, and farmers' markets

Whatever people in the trade might say, not all flavoured syrups are made by large food companies. What is probably the smallest company in the market has already won a Great Taste award, been featured on Ready, Steady Cook, and is listed by several top retail names.

It is Taylerson's Malmesbury Syrups, from Wiltshire, made by a syrup maker who knows milk - John Taylerson is a farmer who has been through agricultural college, has worked for Milklink, and also worked in milk packaging. He makes his syrups in the same field as the natural spring water he uses.



"People do like the idea that a flavour can be made by a peasant in the Cotswolds!" responds John Taylerson. "I like a place where people can come and say 'this is a place where country food can be made'."

"I don't care if people say I'm just one guy toiling away in the middle of a field... but if they criticised my product, that would be awful."

John Taylerson believes in face-to-face feedback on his products, and so he always tries flavours out at farmers' markets, and with working baristas.

"The secret is to do a lot of sampling, and a lot of listening. At farmers' markets, you get instant feedback, from a customer you have to look in the face. This is research which you can't fake, from people you've never met, and you learn very quickly from it. There's no point in trying to greenwash these people - big companies can play all kinds of stunts with marketing claims, but face-to-face at a farmers' market, country people will see right through you!"

"My original training was in milking cows, so I do know something about the taste and smell of different milks, and I like discussions with baristas about what works with milk."

"We're beginning to pick up business from more independent coffee houses, and I like to deliver to coffee houses in person, because I learn a lot about how all the different people work. Sometimes, it's the operator who learns - one coffee shop owner took

the attitude of 'you're not putting flavours in my coffee', and was absolutely taken aback when his staff told him: 'oh, lots of people come in asking for that'. There's a lot to be learned from café-owners who care, and they're all interested to know where the pixie-dust is in a good product!"

Taylerson has been a pioneer of flavours which he believes will work, even if it takes a long time - it took nine months to find the ginger he wanted, but now says that he has a ginger nice enough to be drunk in a black coffee.

And, he says, small makers can work remarkably fast. "I don't have to make batch sizes, and if a client says I've run out, come in at the weekend and make some more, then that's how it should be. You'd be surprised how quickly a small company can get the product out - we've put 10,000 bottles for John Lewis out in ten days, and we did a couple of thousand bottles direct to consumers alone in July."

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Franke, the automatic espresso machine maker, has devised a system to dispense flavours automatically. "I haven't seen an automatic machine that can work like this before," the company's James Nicholson told us. "I was sceptical, mainly from a cleaning perspective, because the potential health issues are tremendous. But rigorous tests have been done, and after each shot, the pump is now steam-injected, and there is no sugar build-up at all. We've even left one uncleaned for four months to see what happened, and it didn't block."

"The machine allows for five syrups and possibly a sauce. You programme dosage, to taste, and you can programme the order of dispense."




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Sept/Oct 2010

Britain to get its first consumer coffee festival?

The first imaginative move of Britain's most important year in coffee is an unmissable one - it is the proposed Bath Coffee Festival, set for 19th-20th May next year.

The concept of a coffee event open to the public has been most successfully achieved in Australia, where the Sydney Rocky Arena Festival draws tens of thousands of visitors, with coffee vendors offering specialty brews at very low prices, and natives of domestic coffee machines strongly represented. The Bath project is being run by Linda Derrington of Coventry, a local press agency which has experience in running community events.

The project already has the interest of the right authorities, because beyond simply promoting the coffee trade there is a clear aim of promoting Bath as a venue, also of engagement and networking activities, and a promise of at least half the profits going to local community projects and charities.

Reaction from the trade in the early days of the idea has been cautious, but cautious - typically, Angus McKenzie of Melbourne said "I think it could be a fantastic idea - I have attended events like at the events in America and Australia, and thought what a great opportunity they give. It could be a grand day out for consumers, and giving the consumer more knowledge about coffee can only benefit us all."

After trade initiatives leading up to 2010, page 7

Con-man at the espresso van

Make sure you get the money, barista - this customer's con-man is actor Robert Glenister, who plays Ash in the TV series Midsomer, pictured as set with one of Big Coffee's Lavazza-branded Piggies.

These alcohol coffee operators have been making their presence felt elsewhere in the trade this month. A claim of 'the greenest mobile coffee franchise' has been made by the Laver Green Bean Machine of Dorset, which has four bar-ke to start operating in London this month. Solo-Coffee has won a 'Coffee Bar of the Year' prize for its three-vehicle at St Albans station, and a new 'in Chatterbox' over plans by Chris Cochran to trade from a Piggie coffee van in the town centre, because coffee is not an allowable food under council rules, down a host of comments to the local paper - every one of them in support of the van.

World's greenest roaster is set for UK launch

The machine presented as the greenest coffee roaster to be launched in the UK during the first week of the London Green Festival comes from the Loring Green Roaster company, which has been trading since Steve Perry, 1998.

Meet Stumpy

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In a survey of Britain's coffee houses, performed by Allegra Strategies, cafe operators were asked about their sources of trade news. Who came top? We did!

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