



No.1 UK coffee chain (Bev-e awards, 2009)

Boughton's COFFEE HOUSE

May 2010

More relevant coffee trade information than any other magazine – and in less pages!

Coffee bars - how important are we to the national high street?

The coffee trade has been agitated in the past month by discussion concerning the size of the trade – and some open disbelief of recently published figures. Research sponsored by Starbucks has suggested that the coffee-house trade is far more important to the high street economy than anyone has thought so far, which is exactly what the trade wants to hear – however, the research goes on to make the remarkable claim that 35 per cent of the total adult population, twenty million people, visit coffee shops in a typical week, and that 'up to 25 per cent of footfall on a high street is made up by people out for a coffee'.

These figures have been thought unlikely, although Starbucks repeated them at the recent Allegra summit, and in Starbucks' own publicity material announcing the figures, managing director Darcy Willson-Rymer was quoted as saying: "This report gives us vital insight into the changing high street."

However, when *Coffee House* enquired of Starbucks whether they, as sponsors, were not sufficiently surprised to query the findings, a spokesperson made the curious response: 'we must make it clear that this is an independent research study and these are not Starbucks findings'.

Could such figures actually be true?

A senior manager at another high street chain has commented firmly: "Take the economically-active population, cut out the C/D categories, take a percentage of what's left, and we're not going to get twenty million."

This magazine has suggested that the idea of every other person between the ages of 15 and 74 going into a coffee shop once a week sounds improbable. We have asked whether the figure might really be twenty million 'transactions' a week, which, taking account of those making multiple visits in a week, or even in a day, is a more likely figure.

(By coincidence, during April before these figures came out, *Marketing* magazine commented that 'more than



The UK's first consumer coffee festival - this month. See page 6

Pubs take more coffee business

Pubs are continuing to fight for a bigger share of the quality-coffee market. The JD Wetherspoon pub chain, which said recently that its coffee sales had reached half a million cups a week, is now going for even more, by opening at 7am across its entire estate.

In a swipe at the mainstream coffee trade, the chain has said: "We felt sorry for those who were having to pay double for coffee at the likes of Costa and Starbucks." The Scottish press reports that the MD of the Scottish & Newcastle Pub Company has now encouraged his 2,000 tenants to develop their businesses into the 'third place' slot presently occupied by coffee shops, by offering quality coffee and wi-fi service.



There are many independent examples of pub coffee doing well – our picture shows Jurgen Seltmann of the Pedn-Olva seaside hotel in St Ives, which has shown a big increase in hot beverage business since upgrading its equipment and effort (La Spaziale machine, Darlings coffee), and at one stage selling 577 beverages in one week, a figure which some provincial coffee-houses would be very happy to reach.

half of UK adults visit coffee shops, but most do so infrequently'. This is based on work by Mintel, which says that only 13.1 per cent of customers count as 'heavy users', visiting once a week or more.)

However, the coffee trade has reacted more positively to one figure in the report, which suggests that 'the presence of coffee shops typically boosts the local economy of the high street by 3-5 per cent'. In a presentation to his own Summit last month, Allegra chief Jeffrey Young claimed that if it were not for coffee shops, some high streets would have become 'ghost towns', and suggested that even a trade benefit of five per cent might be a low figure.

The café trade is generally happy with this finding.

"It provides the trade with an important answer to the increasing number of councils who are complaining about the number of coffee shops on their high streets," commented Louie Salvoni of the Coffee Council, an organisation recently formed to speak

up for the coffee trade. "How can they complain if we can show that we are bringing them positive growth?"

Two major chains told *Coffee House* magazine that it is precisely for this reason that they are more often being invited into retail-regeneration areas.

The survey goes on to offer the more interesting figure that, of 1,356 town centres and high streets surveyed, 25 per cent do not have a coffee shop. The number of 'high streets' in Britain is very hard to establish – the Local Data Company surveys 705, and a quango conference recently reported the astonishing figure of 5,410.

But, recalling what Gerry Ford of Caffe Nero predicted several years ago about the growth for the coffee shop industry to be found in the provinces, that one may turn out to be the most useful statistic of all.

The Role of Coffee Shops on the High Street is published by Allegra Strategies. A longer examination of the survey can be found at our website: www.coffee-house.org.uk

Hoffman to spotlight non-espreso brews

James Hoffmann, the first Briton ever to have won the World Barista Championship, is to begin a new venture – which will avoid the use of espresso coffee!

Like many fans of great coffee, he knows that many of the world's truly superb coffees do not lend themselves to espresso. So, following his launch of the Square Mile roastery, his new Penny University is a retail venture which, he says, will serve 'complex and varied filter coffees'.



"I can confirm that we won't be doing any espresso based drinks there whatsoever," he told us. "Forsaking espresso, we'll be offering instead a plethora of full immersion, cloth and paper filter, syphon and cold drip brewing options, each paired with a Square Mile coffee."

"It's with great excitement that we will share our love for the truly exceptional coffees that until now have been unfortunately scarce and unfamiliar."



INSIDE

THE IDEAS ISSUE - a collection of initiatives begins on page 10

The question of quality - begins page 8

Bath festival - page 6

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The City and Guilds VRQ course in barista work is being run in the north-east for the first time. There is an opportunity to put baristas through the three-day course at Pumphreys on Tyneside, 18-20 May. Candidates do need some experience on an espresso machine before they take the course, but absolute beginners can arrange with the course provider for extra tuition. Enquiries to - paula.archer@pumphreys-coffee.co.uk

The international chain Gloria Jean's, which has 489 cafes in Australia and 432 more in the rest of the world, is facing a lawsuit from a small US-based coffee supplier, Western Export Services, which is suing for \$56 million in unpaid commissions and damages. Gloria Jeans is connected to a religious organisation, and the Australian press have referred to it as a 'secretive' business.

While UK food exports have risen for the fifth year in a row, and now approach £10 billion, fastest growth comes from our exports of soft drinks, up 20.6%. In Britain, however, soft drink sales have grown only two per cent by value, and Britvic has claimed that consumers are switching from smoothies, pure juice and sports drinks, and trading down to cola, juice drinks and squash.

The Mintel research organisation has suggested that the British retail coffee market reached £782 million in 2009, and will grow to £976 by 2014. Instant coffee was rated at 80% of value sales (£626 million), growing at 12 per cent. Sales of roast or ground coffee were assessed at £149 million. Mintel suggests that over-55s are the biggest users of coffee, and Ben Perkins, head of food and drink research at Mintel, is quoted as having made the curious comment that 'the market stands to lose a considerable proportion of drinkers if younger consumers do not develop a taste for the product going forward'. He is quoted as saying: "The issue with the younger end of the market is that these consumers don't drink instant coffee, which is the largest part of the market, so the big brands need to tap into this age group."

Police in Burnley have complimented the manager of the local Massarella's who saved a baby's life by giving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. The manager, Donna Hinchcliffe, made the very interesting comment: "The company trains everyone in first aid... and you don't expect to have to use it."

A major source of 'shrinkage' in the food industry is a retailer's own staff, according to the G45 security company, which says that one in ten workers in the sector has committed a crime

against their employer in the last 12 months, the most common being consuming produce without paying for it. The company claims that 160,000 employees have confessed to this, which seems a very large figure that may be the result of some internal calculations. A criminology specialist consulted by the company said: "Staff dishonesty is like having a gorilla in the corner of the store - most managers see it, few like to discuss it and even fewer are willing to take it on."

Kraft Foods is reported to be putting a £7.5 million campaign behind its promotion of the new Kenco Eco Refill pack, which the company claims is a UK 'first', and has 97 per cent less packaging weight than the Kenco glass jars.

Pukka Herbs has won a Soil Association Organic Award for its After Dinner organic herbal tea, a blend of bitter-sweet digestive herbs including organic fennel, chicory and cardamom, intended to support the digestive system.

Paddy & Scott's of Suffolk have won a regional listing with Tesco for its gourmet "When do you drink your coffee?" range. Company founder Paddy Bishopp has said that most coffee brands market their coffees by countries, whereas he believes most consumers want the drink to fit with the occasion on which they are going to drink it, and are less interested in the identification of a specific origin. His Morning Coffee is a medium-bodied South American blend, the All Day Coffee is described as a medium-roasted Colombian blend, and his "Great With Friends Coffee" is a dark roasted Indonesian and African blend which is intended to have 'not too much' caffeine.

Vegware, the company who made the world's first compostable coffee cup lid, are reported to have a new client in a new health-food restaurant chain launching in London and New York. Vegware's Joe Frankel says he expects Vegware to 'at least double' its turnover this year.

The problems between the Green Coffee Machine and Cheltenham council, on which we have reported before, have taken yet another new turn. Having finally been allowed to use a Piaggio Ape in a main shopping area, owner Chris Crichton has now been told that he does not have a licence to sell cold drinks or water - to do so during the summer, he must pay a further £3,000 licence fee. There were four objections to his licence extension, but sixty customers and one councillor expressed support. The council agreed to grant him the extension, but with negotiation on the fee to be held later.

Cadbury afternoon cocoa on the way

A group of retail entrepreneurs have won permission from Kraft to open a national chain of Cadbury-branded cafés. The proposed Cadbury Cocoa Houses are to become a 60-strong nationwide chain, intended to compete with high street coffee shops across the UK, yet differentiated by offering 'affordable' afternoon tea and a dedicated chocolatier service.

David Morris, a former director of restaurants at Harrods, will lead the new venture, with retail entrepreneur Marilyn Newman. It is not the first time that a café venture under the Cocoa House name has been tried - one opened in Bath several years ago but was closed in 2007. Negotiations are said to have begun with landlords for a proposed London launch before the end of the year.

Impressive pricing at Top Tea Place

There is a fascinating trade aspect to the success of the Black Swan tea-room in winning the Tea Guild's award for Top Tea Place 2010. The business, at Helmsley, on the edge of the North York Moors, has a menu which features some extremely challenging pricing - the cheapest pot of tea is £2.95, and some are priced as high as £3.95.

The same applies to coffee, with espresso at £3.50, cappuccino at £3.75, and a mocha at £3.95 - and there are still some people in this trade who don't believe that the four-pound speciality coffee exists! And we do like to see that the venue puts on such events as talks on tea, and themed afternoon tea events - including the fascinating 'rhubarb tea'.

The Top London Afternoon Tea award has been won by the Langham hotel, just off Regent Street, and the City and Country Hotel award goes to the Manor House, Castle Combe. The Tea Council has also awarded 69 special awards of excellence to tearooms this year. Five of the Bettys chain got certificates, as did a previous winner, though under a different name - the Rocke Cottage tea room at Clungunford is the former Bird on the Rock, a national winner.



The Swan accepts the traditional Top Tea Place stained-glass window

Starbucks takes on promo Twitters

Starbucks has become one of the first brands to use the 'promoted tweets' service from the social networking site Twitter.

The idea has been described by the organisation as 'ordinary tweets that businesses and organisations want to highlight to a wider group of users', but marketing consultants have expressed doubts, saying that while many brands have used Twitter well as a customer-service aid, sales promotions could simply end up irritating recipients. In April, a research study found that marketing managers are still undecided on whether Twitter is a valuable marketing aid or simply 'an over-hyped, narcissistic craze that has no place in the professional world'. Even before the news of the 'promoted tweets' arrived, 23 per cent of those respondents said that Twitter will disappear as companies saturate it with commercial marketing.

Social networking sites were also criticised in the media last month after a tea room in Leigh, Lancashire, used a Facebook message to fire a teenage worker - in a message which contained seventeen spelling and grammatical mistakes, but ended with two kisses.

The new Nespresso-compatible capsules made by Sara Lee have now gone on sale, with the manufacturer distributing an initial million capsules to superstores in France. The capsules offer four varieties, at a recommended price of €2.99 for ten, but are not manufactured with the approval of Nespresso, who told us: "it is inevitable that competitors will launch alternatives in an attempt to share in our success. We are confident that consumers will continue to seek the quality that Nespresso uniquely provides". Meanwhile, Nespresso is creating 73 jobs in York at a new customer service centre. A spokesman said Nestlé UK was investing half a million pounds in establishing the centre, holding a team of 48 'coffee specialists' to take consumer enquiries from October.

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Bristol to discuss furniture problems

Bristol may become the UK leader in working to resolve the constant arguments between caterers and councils over external 'café culture' areas. A new initiative there follows an increase in local use of outside furniture, and also an increase in complaints over access and untidiness.

It has now been suggested that the number of tables and chairs allowed outside any business should be regulated. The proprietor would have to submit a diagram showing the number of tables and chairs they wish to use, pictures and details of the kind of furniture proposed, and proof of public liability insurance. Approval would carry a fee, of an amount yet to be calculated, but the local council would not be allowed to use the fees to make a profit – the revenue would have to be used to run and manage the system. Breaches of the conditions could result in a business being banned from using external furniture. The plans are to be put out for consultation.

Starbucks works on more drive-thrus

Starbucks has submitted plans for a drive-thru on the site of a former Little Chef just off the M50 at Ross-on-Wye. Meanwhile, its operational partner Euro Garages has resubmitted plans to build a Starbucks drive-thru in a former car wash at the Deepdale Shopping Park, Preston. Councillors have protested about possible extra traffic and night-time nuisance.

The brand's drive-thru in Deeside was opened last month by the local MP; unfortunately, neither Starbucks nor Euro Garages has responded to requests for an interview on the operation of a drive-thru in the UK.

Meanwhile, Starbucks is also to open 29 sites at Welcome Break motorway service stations over the next 16 months, replacing the operator's own Coffee Primo brand. It has been reported that these Starbucks outlets will feature a 'less corporate' look, with reduced signage. The first sites to be revamped will be at Oxford Services on the M40 and Hopwood Park on the M42. Coffee Primo stores have been selling 16 million cups of coffee a year, but chief executive Rod McKie said he expected the deal with Starbucks to increase sales by at least 30 per cent. That, analysts have pointed out, is the effect which occurred at Roadchef services after it introduced Costa Coffee.

Starbucks is also to open up inside a Currys store at the Lakeside retail park, Thurrock.

Welsh culture set for franchising

The Coffee Culture café in Waterstone's bookstore, Llandudno, has come top in a poll to find the best Fairtrade beverage in Wales - in second place was its sister company in Swansea. The Red Café Community Project in Swansea took third, with the Herb Garden Café of Llandrindod Wells and Cardiff's Embassy Café close behind.

The two Coffee Cultures are both run by Barry Mortlock, formerly of the award-winning Badgers tea-room in Llandudno, who is now looking to franchise his new business.

"Our concept is based on quality and consistency, in surroundings where anyone of any age feels welcome, relaxed and comfortable," he told us. "Our proven systems are constantly reviewed to ensure maximum results and profitability and we have no product wasters – all items sold perform and are profitable.

"It's a great concept for those persons who have always wanted to own and work a coffee shop, whereby they don't have to spend years learning the trade but can perform after a few weeks' training. We are already in negotiations with a major high street retailer as we speak and opportunities are hopefully becoming available before the end of the year."

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Don't believe what they tell you about this being a young person's business - the owner of the Georgian Tea Room in Topsham, Exeter, has celebrated 20 years in business, but even at the age of 65, is not proposing to retire. Heather Knee says, admirably, that she still gets excited at the prospect of serving customers. And Paul Georgiou of Fountains Coffee House in Bradford has just turned 80, and has been running cafes for 40 years. Superbly, the family has said: "We have seen a lot of cafes fall by the wayside, but we have still maintained a lot of our customer base because we have kept the retro 'frothy coffee shop' style of the cafe which people like."

A council in the Republic of Ireland has asked the Shannon airport authorities to re-train its staff in the making of Irish coffee. The request comes after complaints about the general quality of the beverage served at the airport.

The bar at Shannon is actually named after Joe Sheridan, the man who invented the drink in 1942. Councillor Pat McMahon has said that the lounge is used by passengers in transit, who want to try the drink for which the area is famous, and that they expect it to be taken seriously and made properly.

The tiny railway station cafe My Coffee Stop of Enfield, which is already in line for a European business award, has been nominated for a Love London award from Smooth Radio. The café's Karen Mercer said: "It is so lovely to be loved. Our business has never been just about money, we do it from our hearts."

The milk company behind Cravendale has created a prototype jug that claims to solve the problem of sour milk - it lets people know when milk has gone sour, by a sensor built into the base of the jug which measures the acidity of the contents and creates an alert on an LCD screen on the outer of the jug. According to Cravendale, households alone in Britain throw out 333,000 tonnes of milk a year, worth £250 million, because it was not used in time.

There is a problem at the Runaway café at Lewes station, where rail authorities have decided they want the facility to be more like a seven-day high street coffee shop, instead of the traditional café which the present tenants have run for 23 years. In the past, the café's customers have included Princess Diana, the Duke of Gloucester, country singer Willie Nelson, and various actors. Locals have protested.

James Aimer, the Dundee based coffee roaster and tea packer, has

completed its 125th year in business by finishing the first phase of a three-year investment plan. This year's work was the installation of a £200,000 fill-and-pack line. The new production line uses an aluminium-free, fully-recyclable packaging material supplied by Italian firm Goglio. "This material is environmentally-friendly, because aluminium is considered unfriendly because of the amount of energy needed to produce it," Goglio told us. "However, this material is still a laminate consisting of two different types of plastic - so, when you recycle it, it can only be recycled to a second-rate plastic granulate, which can no longer be used for a food application."

Moran Beverage Services of the Tees valley has introduced Caffé Vinci, a blend which it says has taken two years to develop.

Kenco has introduced an out-of-home version of its Tassimo machine, which uses containers called T-discs. As one is placed into the machine, a sensor reads its barcode and selects the right brewing process.

Glenfinlas of Edinburgh, which has imported Green Mountain Coffee for some years, is now the UK distributor for the George Howell coffee company of Boston. The company proposes to launch the coffees to the trade in September, but is already using them in its own café sites, and has entered them for this year's Great Taste Awards.

A catering magazine report which said that Asda has de-listed the Clipper and Cafedirect brands has been repeated by several other news media - although it is not entirely correct. Jon Marlow, head of sales at Cafédirect, has confirmed to us that two of his freeze-dried instant coffees in 100gm sizes were indeed de-listed by Asda - but were replaced by five roast-and-ground products and a new hot chocolate. Asda has also confirmed to us that overall, it has added several Cafedirect lines. Clipper has not responded to enquiries.

A French company called Le Whif has introduced an inhalable coffee. Coffee Le Whif will be sold in a lip-stick-style container at about \$3. www.lewhif.com.

Two well-known London espresso bars are in the shortlist for the restaurant and bar design awards, which will be announced on 22 June. The two involved are Kaffeine and Tinderbox.

Drury, the London coffee roaster, has an opening for a barista trainer.
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Harrow council and Starbucks have been involved in a hearing over a coffee house which has been trading without permission since 2007. The chain opened in a former bookshop in a conservation area, and was refused permission for an A3 licence. The argument now is that Starbucks says it has proved that its business at the site is popular, but the council says its popularity is irrelevant, compared to the damage done to the stipulated balance of trading activity in the area. A decision is expected by the end of May.

Twinings has reported that its Everyday tea will now be sourced from Rainforest Alliance certified farms. The move should be in place by 2015.

The new Ziarno coffee shop at Chester's Forum shopping centre, opened on the site of the former Coffee Republic, is intended to be the first of a new chain, says owner Mike Fox. The name comes from one of his Polish store managers - it means 'bean' in her own language.

Coffee company Caffè Vergnano 1882 is reported to have opened a coffee bar at the Mailbox complex in Birmingham. The chain is Italy's fifth

largest coffee roaster, exporting to over 45 countries worldwide. The operators of Caffè Vergnano in London, who have now opened their third site, are not involved in the mid-lands venture.

The Window Coffee Room in Norwich, opened a few weeks ago by Hayley Draper, is seeking to be recognised as the smallest in the world by the Guinness Book of Records. The café has room for five seated customers, 'so long as they are prepared to get cosy'.

The Lancashire-based company Leckenby's is putting its tea-room concept up for franchise. The company is based in Bury, and is looking for two pilot franchisees in the north of England. One Leckenby shop was recently opened by Vicky Binns, who plays a young cheating girl (Molly) in Coronation Street - and curiously, we think that the actress Jennie McAlpine, the red-haired one called Fiz in the same soap, actually used to be a waitress at Leckenbys.

Coolaboola, the Newcastle cafe, has appeared in the *Independent's* list of the UK's 50 best coffee houses; Atkinson's in Lancaster has cropped up in the *Times* list of 'local heroes'.

BBs sites re-born as Love Coffee

A former BB's franchisee has developed his new coffee chain, which will trade from a mix of old BB's sites and new venues, with a target of 25 sites by the end of the year. The chain is Love Coffee, and the operator is Shashi Patel of DJ & C Foods.

"I was BB's largest franchisee for 12 years with 13 cafés, so I felt we knew the market very well and understand our customer base," says Shashi Patel. "When BB's went into administration, it was an opportunity to do our own thing. We have a good track record with landlords and they have received the new brand very favourably. We have sourced coffee from the Nairobi Coffee Company and plan to keep our offer simple, doing what we know best - good coffee, great tasting muffins and delicious sandwiches."



Meadowhall and Woking are the first sites to be rebranded, and the chain has sites throughout Cheshire, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Derbyshire.

Legislation which has begun its route through parliament could adversely affect coffee shops with Wi-Fi, says the Open Rights pressure group.

The Digital Economy Bill, which seeks to prevent copyright infringement by illegal downloads, would place liability on organisations that operate internet networks - like coffee shops, which could in theory face suspension of its Internet service if a customer downloaded something they should not while on the premises.

"Bring it on!" Dave Birch of wi-fi provider GotSpot told *Coffee House*. "The hardware/software combination that we provide allows us to prevent access to sites and limit actual traffic. If the Bill includes some kind of 'best endeavours to prevent' clause, this should be OK."

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This is pretty ritzy for a coffee house and tea-room, isn't it? It's the new venture by Somerset roaster and tea-blender DJ Miles, which has opened the Mr Miles Tea Rooms & Coffee House in Taunton. This is "a hark back to traditional English tearooms, when time was taken to enjoy a good cup of tea," says the company.

Coffee United and the Miller story

The First Choice and Gala Coffee brands, owned by the European organisation Drie Mollen, have now been brought together under the single name of United Coffee, to be led by the former First Choice MD, Elaine Higginson.

The move is to be part of an expansion programme in which the organisation will seek to increase its activity in six European countries. The two former British companies were not in direct competition - First Choice Coffee was extremely active in foodservice and hospitality, with a lot of business in fast-food and 'quick-service retail', while Gala was the main private-label coffee supplier for retail business. The new United Coffee's customer list will include Tesco, Waitrose, Lidl, and Co-op in retail, and Subway, McDonalds, Debenhams, Ikea, and JD Wetherspoon in foodservice.



At exactly the same time, the new book by First Choice's founder George Miller has appeared. *Life in the Espresso Lane* (reviewed on our website) is the story of First Choice, from founding in 1987 until he sold it to Drie Mollen a few years back.

Caffè Ritazza's new barista champion will have to wait almost a year to get his chance in the British championships – by unfortunate timing, his in-house win in the SSP 2010 contest coincided with the end of the UK barista championships, so the company's winner will now be entered for the 2011 British event. The new SSP champ is Matthew Roberts of Caffè Ritazza in Huddersfield, who was praised for his creativity and innovation in his signature drink, a chilli mocha. Curiously, although contestants had to use standard Ritazza coffee in the final, they did not have to in the early round – we think Matthew may have qualified with Grumpy Mule coffee.



We make absolutely no apology, not in the slightest bit, for reminding you that since August last year we been exhorting the trade to take advantage of the commercial possibilities of the World Barista Championship, which will be held in London in June. Our writer Max the Bean (left) has been shouting himself hoarse about it for months. There is surprisingly little official promotion of the event, but any operator still has time to run their own promotion round it, and you can find the latest news of the competitors, in what is probably a unique advance line-up, on our website (and contacting every coffee association in the world about their entrants was fun, we can tell you!) You'll find it at www.coffee-house.org.uk



It is well-known that Australia's import rules are the toughest in the world, but this story still surprised us – President Yudhoyono of Indonesia sent a gift of Kopi Luwak palm civet coffee to the Aussie prime minister. The Aussie customs people were not impressed, and sent it off for a special permit to enter Australia because, they said, it could 'potentially be contaminated with exotic and endemic pathogens'. The Aussie PM will, it seems, have to wait to try the world's most expensive coffee.

Nescafé is going to bring back the Gold Blend couple to its TV ads, but sadly not with the original pair of actors who helped create the genre of 'continuing story' advertisements (and both of whom went on to star in long-running TV dramas). Nescafé has said: "our objective was to re-invent the relationship theme of the classic adverts in a modern and subtle way." In other words, nobody could think of a new idea...

Kaldi regrets the lavatorial humour, but refers readers to *The Times of India*, from which this is quoted. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi has decided to build 250 fancy coffee house-cum-toilet complexes in major markets ahead of the Commonwealth Games. This, says the MCD, will change the public perception of public toilets. "A person will be able to sit inside one of these toilets and have an ice-cream."

We have often supported the idea that coffee should be covered more by the mass media, so one must applaud Starbucks' work in the States, where the company has worked with radio presenters from Boston down to California, offering them barista training and tutorials, backed up with interviews with the brand's 'global coffee educator'. However, Kaldi sympathises with Starbucks over the unfortunate phrase used by the *Clear Channel Business Wire*, which probably meant something entirely different when it wrote: 'about three per cent of the world's coffee is only good enough to end up at Starbucks'.

A recycling company, Axiom Polymers, has developed a new fabric called Reworked, which is created from blending mixed electrical-waste

A surprising identity has cropped up in charge of a new trade supplier in Yorkshire. It is the Heavenly Coffee Company, run by Katie Evans... and that is the daughter of David Veal, whose Café Sienna company recently became part of the Miko organisation. Katie is offering her own range of coffee (roasted by Masteroast), as well as Rombouts and Lavazza. The tea is Teapigs, Twinings and Jacksons, chocolate from Van Houten, the Italian Beverage Dropissimo and Ghirardelli, and training is by Jon Skinner. Trading area is Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire directly but further afield by carrier. "Although Heavenly Coffee is only a couple of months old, we have nearly 25 years of experience in coffee between us," Katie told us.



Kaldi

products and post-consumer retail waste plastics. However, the third ingredient is spent coffee grounds, collected from offices, cafes and factories. The result is an 'aromatic pellet', which can be processed into a tactile furniture-surfacing product, described as a cross between dark leather and wood – and with an aroma of coffee.

A community shop in Snowdonia has been saved with an initiative that will re-develop it into a deli and café. The local village has a name which combines Wales and coffee – Llanfrothen.

By quite remarkable coincidence, the same kind of customer-service complaint has occurred at both a pub and a 'big-two' coffee shop in the same town, Bridport in Somerset, in the same week. The coffee shop put up signs saying 'no milk' after running out one afternoon, and when customers pointed out that a Waitrose store was a couple of paces away, the cafe manager said that the chain's contract with one milk supplier, and the need to stick to their pricing, prevented him from going and buying a few litres to keep his customers happy. At exactly the same time, a local pub which is part of a very big chain suffered a breakdown on its ice-making machine. When customers said the manager could pick some up from the supermarket next door, he refused, quoting in-house health and safety rules. No leeway for any initiative on customer service there, then...





The coffee world will be watching very closely to see what happens in the middle of May, when the first consumer-aimed Festival of Coffee is held at Bath.

The project is in line with recent calls for the British beverage industry to engage the average consumer with the concept of quality coffee, in the same way that wine and cooking in general have become familiar media and TV subjects.

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 consumer visitors. It has never been tried in Britain (although there are plans for one in London) and most curiously, the festival is not being run by the trade - it is the inspiration of Linda Donaldson of Geometry, a local press agency which has some experience in running community events.

The project was started with the aim of promoting Bath as a venue, and with a promise to put at least half of any profits into local community projects and charities. Not surprisingly, the local business community has taken up the idea enthusiastically, but several names from the coffee trade have also decided to get involved in the pioneer event... tentatively, and to see where it leads.

"It has opened people's eyes to the scope of the coffee industry," Linda Donaldson told us. "In Bath, there has been a lot of interest - people have asked why something like this hasn't happened before.

"From the trade, the reaction was mixed, largely because most trade companies are geared to the idea of trade shows, and it did take some of them time to get round the idea of talking to consumers.

"Companies like Illy and Lavazza got it immediately, because they are geared to the consumer. For some other coffee companies, we had to discuss with them the benefits of explaining the quality of their product direct to the consumer... and then they got excited.

"But still there was the expected questioning of why something like this should be held outside the M25! Well, you have to hold something like this in a truly beautiful place, and in addition, the south-west is home to a quite extraordinary number of craft roasters, suppliers, and great coffee-houses."

From an internal trade point of view, the most notable result of the event so far has been to draw attention to training - in an imaginative move, several local unemployed youngsters were taken from the area to the Metropolitan Kimbo training room in London, where

Bath - an experiment for the whole trade

The first UK coffee festival for consumers was not inspired from inside the trade... but the whole industry will be watching the result



Ready to see what happens at the coffee trade's first consumer event - clockwise from left, chef Martin Blunos, barista 'lazy Jose' Melim, Origin roaster Phil Gevaux, and event organiser Linda Donaldson

they were put through the City and Guilds VRQ course by trainer Jon Skinner, with the promise of interviews and likely job placements when they returned to Bath. The youngsters will appear at the festival as examples of employment opportunities in the modern coffee trade.

"We had a fascinating course at Metropolitan," said Jim Devlin, the man who drove the concept of the VRQ course. "We had four passes and two merits. Four of them have got jobs from being on the course, and two have interviews lined up. Jon Skinner was very firm with them" (we hear he may have sent one out of the room for texting!), "but he turned them on and made them enthusiastic - they had decided to go for a night out in London, and ended up revising instead.

"What Jon and Angus MacKenzie at Metropolitan have done is very important for the future of this work. Now, Angus and I are going to get together to find out exactly where is there some grant money which we can apply for to continue this training. We are all very encouraged by this."

(At the same time as Jim Devlin made those comments to us, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills made some very critical comments about training in the hospitality sector. They said that over a quarter of those working in the sector haven't learned something new in the past year, and that one worker in ten hasn't even read a book in the past year. However, 46 per cent of staff sur-

veyed in the hospitality sector said they would like to learn a new skill).

Several notable trade names are taking part in the Bath event, although the first two to become involved were not industry giants - they were John Taylerson, the artisan flavoured-syrup maker, and Martin Carwardine, the coffee roaster from Somerset. Taylerson is a unique supplier in a flavour sector dominated by giant names, but he was the first to carry out a consumer survey on the subject, and has created some interesting flavours - surprisingly, his ginger flavour creates a very interesting aspect to a black coffee.

Taylerson will be the first at Bath to launch a new product - he has devised

single-serve portioned sachets of popular flavours. This is not entirely unique or new, but has not recently been seen, and John tells us that he already has enquiries about making them for the trade. Look also for his new chai flavouring, and perhaps advance samples of a Christmas flavouring.

An unexpected new name is Lazy Jose, who turns out to be Jose Melim, winner of the south-western barista championship this year. He has produced a range of 'seasonal' coffees, roasted for him by one of the currently well-known artisan names (we're not allowed to say who!).

"I'm probably a very unusual barista because I love not only the roasting process but also exploring the farms and origins of my coffee. We're currently offering some fabulous Columbian, Bolivian and Brazilian coffees. We can cater for delis and small coffee retailers who are looking for something new, exciting and special to keep their customers interested."

Exhibitors at the show include Arla Cravendale, Lavazza, Illy, Cafedirect, Origin, Taylors and Whittards. Presenters and demonstrators include the barista trainer Daisy Rollo on latte art, which is a subject familiar in the trade but a good crowd-pleaser for the general public, a display of artwork using coffee instead of paint, and the local Michelin-starred chef Martin Blunos will be demonstrating cooking with coffee.

Several local coffee-houses are taking part in a loyalty card scheme - consumers buying coffee at various local venues can present a stamped card at the show for a free beverage.

A list of exhibitors and what they are doing at the Bath festival can be found at www.coffee-house.org.uk. The event runs at Bath recreation ground, 15th-16th May.



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The tide of the coffee-house trade is turning - where the trade, the public, and the media have for several years all looked to the major coffee chains as leaders to be followed, the situation has turned round.

At the latest Allegra Coffee Summit, a trade audience heard that the day of the independent coffee operator is not just coming – it is here. In the words of Lavazza's Barry Kither, compere for the day: "for so many years, people have been saying 'look at the big boys'. Now the big boys are looking at the independents. We are now in probably the most exciting time since this coffee boom started."

It is usual for an Allegra summit to feature speakers from the big three coffee chains. This year, Costa's managing director John Derkach told the trade that "the rate of innovation in our industry is as yet nowhere near fast enough for a mature industry." The trade had to understand, he said, that the coffee shop of five years' time will not look like the coffee shop of today, and that we needed innovation to go for a clear target market:

"The growth opportunity is not just those who don't visit coffee shops at all, but those who only visit monthly. So the opportunity is to 'build trial' among those who are not coffee aficionados."

In response to a question, he said that the way is probably not through licensed café-bars.

"There is a future for licensed café bars, but for somebody else. It's already very hard to make money out of a coffee bar alone doing £7,000 a week, and the only way is with an uncluttered 'back business', and wine and beer would just clutter it."

He was supported by his rival, Paul Ettinger of Caffè Nero, who told the Summit that the café trade is now 'somewhere between growth and maturity'.

"The big growth rates are in the past. The question is - how far have we come, have we reached saturation, and will we now go into decline? Another very good question is - why, if we have made money in the boom, has this industry still been a graveyard for so many names?"

The areas to concentrate on, he said, are cost structures, which are going to get tougher, and specialisation – this has been debated before, and involves the development of cafes as part of other retail work, such as one new business featuring a coffee bar based around customers who cycle.

"The specialisation of coffee bars in record shops, crèches, all building new communities of coffee, will develop, to

The race for quality – who's watching who?

Progress is in the hands of independent coffee bars, the Allegra Summit is told... because the chains cannot afford to lead in barista quality

the benefit of the individual operators."

(A new example of this has just opened up in Paris - the Sweat Shop is a coffee house with sewing machines on the premises. It has become very popular!)

Social networking will have a big impact, he added, and gave a clue to his own work: "We are re-creating communities, and we want customers to know their community. Imagine you could walk into a coffee bar and know half the people... well, we are working on a website where coffee bars will know who's coming in!"

Nick Tolley, of the well-regarded Taylor Street Baristas café in London, argued that the chains cannot now expand and compete in terms of quality coffee. Briefly, his argument was that labour costs are the key to profitability, and that costs and margins are too tight for the chain operators to develop their quality.

"In the future, demand for quality coffee will outstrip supply. However, increasing demand for quality is good and bad news - good news for the consumer, bad news for the operator, because more competing coffee houses will all be requiring quality baristas, and there is a very small pool of indigenous barista talent.

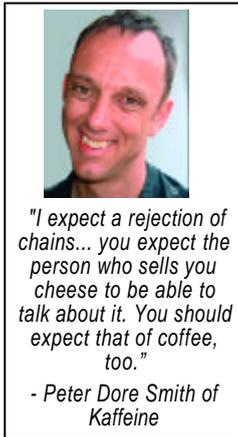
"This is the key difference between chains and independent operators. The primary quality of a chain barista is to push a button and smile, and doing both at the same time is a bonus. So labour does not pose the same cost constraint on a chain!"

"But a quality barista in London costs at least £8.50 an hour, maybe £10, and that is more than you would expect in a chain to pay. So, for the chains to raise their quality will require increased labour cost, which is an undesirable investment for a large operator."

Therefore, he concluded, the chains will not invest in top-quality staff and as a result "will undoubtedly lose place to the new breed of artisan independents and owner-operators".

Another of the new breed, Peter Dore Smith of the new London coffee shop Kaffeine, good-humouredly acknowledged that being an Australian was a help in today's coffee business - "people come into the shop and say 'oh, you must know what you're doing, then!'"

Peter argued that although this is an extremely tough industry to come into, particularly with a café like his which is only 400 sq.ft. at ground level, it can be done by concentrating on a quality offer. Referring to the figures quoted by John Derkach of Costa, Peter said that he is already beating that £7,000 a week 'by a long way', after only eight months in business.



"I expect a rejection of chains... you expect the person who sells you cheese to be able to talk about it. You should expect that of coffee, too."

- Peter Dore Smith of Kaffeine

He supported Nick Tolley's predictions: "I expect a rejection of chains, and a return to artisanal business. It is the same as with wine and cheese - you expect the person who sells you cheese to be able to talk about it. You should expect that of coffee, too."

"And support your quality by having the confidence to say: 'if you don't like it, don't pay for it'. I do - and they all pay!"

Paul Meikle-Janney, the consultant of Coffee Community, told the Summit that the coffee-shop trade must take care in how it promotes this quality.

"In many cafes, there is nothing to suggest whether you might expect a good cup of coffee - but in the good cafes, there are plenty of clues for the customer."

These 'clues' have to be very clear, he stressed. As most consumers don't know one espresso machine from another, the fact that you have the very latest model on your counter will be lost on the average customer. Different messages are now required, and the old idea that barista work is a black art shrouded in secrecy will no longer work. More open-ness is required in detailing coffee, blends, and how drinks are prepared.

"Detail of what you do, and what you sell, is now part of showing your coffee credentials. Your customers would not

expect to order wine without being shown the origins."

At the same time, he said, the wise operator will expect that the café business model will change. No longer can the independent operator leave the customer behind in the desire to be cool or profitable.

"In a café, I saw an old lady who had been 'upsold' to a 20oz drink and a panini, and she had trouble shuffling back to her table. Have we forgotten the customer? A panini is not something our customers ever make at home, it's just something which is easy for the café to slap into a grill... but is it what the customer wants? And should we be serving these customers at the table?"

"Go back to your customer, and work out what's best for them - that's what everyone has forgotten!"

Agreement came from Louie Salvoni of Espresso Service, who also warned to prepare for more change.

"In the 80s, the Italians were the first coffee bars to 'systemise' coffee. That was when we really had coffee wars, and we had them because we were all expressing passion. The chains came along and promised to deliver passion, and the public loved it - but that drive for quality has now dropped off. Suddenly, it's not a drive for quality, but the chains' drive for location and bigger cups.

"The public is already bored!"

"The new baristas have challenged the chains, and in particular the Aussies have come here and shaken us up, and fair play to them for doing so. The artisans are now setting the bar."

"The chains have continued to do a good job in marketing, but not in the drink. Complacency turns to smugness, and you know what that does to a business. The chains are talking about innovation, but innovation demands quality, and they are not delivering quality."

"If no longer believe in quality, we may still make a quick buck in the short term... but we will all be in for a very bleak long-term future."

The best one-liner of the Allegra Summit was from John Derkach, MD of Costa. We were chatting to him before the event, about how Costa's parent, Whitbread, has a new CEO. "He's currently chief executive of EasyJet," responded Derkach. With the slightest pause, he added: "this means, from now on your coffee comes at a different price if you book it a month in advance, and are happy to drink it at midnight..."



What is quality?

Although the speciality coffee trade continues to maintain that higher quality is the essential route to development of the industry, we may be in danger of leaving the customer behind - because customers do not notice 'quality' in coffee in the same way that the trade uses the word, according to some practical testing done by Simon Bower, managing director of Pollards, the Sheffield roastery.

Simon is studying for an MBA, and has taken 'quality' in coffee as his subject. A fellow student, Annabel, is researching waste in the coffee industry, and the question of whether customers appreciate 'quality' has a bearing on both of their projects.

"We are asking whether 'quality' is just a marketing tool," explains Simon Bower. "The 'quality' talked about in differentiating coffees is often smoke and mirrors - I can not think of any other food sector that uses 'quality' so glibly, but without any evidence as to what quality is!

"Annabel's interest is in the amount of coffee that is sold at less than optimum prices, or even thrown away, when evidence suggests that it could be used somewhere."

To assist in both projects, they held a taste test last month at Sheffield University. Pollards had prepared two blends both from the same origins, blended the same way, and roasted to the same profile. The drinks were made by the same barista, using the same proportions and quantities in each cup.

The real difference, explains Simon Bower, was that one blend was made up of coffees officially designated as 'speciality' coffees on the SCAA's scale, and the other was not. Therefore, in theory, any difference detected by the tasters should be down to 'quality' alone.

We are not allowed to report the actual figures, but several hundred tasters showed no noticeable preference for the drink made from what the trade's guidelines consider the better beans.

"The shock," reported Simon Bower after the event, "is that the average person in the street had no overall preference for quality beans!

"For our industry, this now raises more questions than it answers. How exactly does the person in the coffee shop understand 'quality', and what can we do as an industry to understand the implications of this? From one test, at least another ten tests have been conceived - we now have to examine the effects of presentation, packaging, marketing in terms of the customer being told one coffee is better than another, perceived value, and even the impression given by latte art."

This will form the basis of his next step. Meanwhile, we understand that he welcomes observations from roasters elsewhere on the subject.



"The 'quality' talked about is often smoke and mirrors"
- Simon Bower

At last month's Allegra summit, one speaker from a major chain referred to the danger of believing one's own PR. This may possibly have been a rueful reference to the coffee trade's most recent public relations disaster.

Now that the dust has begun to settle on the 'flat white' saga, the trade will be able to reflect on what the kerfuffle over the drink has done for the trade's image - have we come out of this as a trade which brings exciting beverage concepts to the consumer, or as an industry which doesn't know what it is doing?

There is no doubt that the public noticed the trade's promotion of the drink - the internet-monitoring company Hitwise reports that British web surfers used over 650 different search terms that included the words 'flat white' between January and March. They sought for information because the trade's marketing message was confused, and that was because both Costa and Starbucks, desperately trying to be seen as leaders, tried too hard and overreached the bounds of credibility.

Starbucks' press machine came up with the folksy story that the baristas in one of their Soho stores had noticed people asking for 'a new drink', and that their 'highly-trained baristas' had taught themselves to make it. This is unlikely - baristas do not put a new drink on the menu without a corporate directive, and teaching oneself the flat white is a truly admirable achievement.

The real origin was at last summer's Summit in London, where the 'flatie' was discussed in public for the first time, by speakers from Australia and New Zealand, where it originated. Asked whether Starbucks would take it on, they replied: "We don't have any immediate plans to do so, but if the demand was there we would certainly consider it." Barely five months later, they did so, but felt it necessary to concoct a story to go with it.

Costa's effort went too far the other way: a statement said they put in 'more than 12 months of research, development and training of over 6,000 baristas at a total investment of over £1 million'. No wonder consumers were confused - if one of the two high-street giants can let its baristas learn to make a drink by themselves, why did the other spend a year and a million pounds on it?

The chains' launch and counter-launch were fast. Starbucks brought the drink out in London on 7th December, and by 20th January were running a competition in the Welsh press to mark a launch in

The curse of the flat white

Or, quality and the problem of believing your own corporate PR!

Cardiff. A week later Costa held its own launch, saying: "we are offering a product that's not available at other coffee shop chains in the UK. Our unrivalled coffee expertise and highly skilled, talented baristas make us unique in our ability to offer an authentic Flat White".

Neither impressed the Muffin Break chain, which had been selling it for eight years. Other traders protested that the big names could not present the flat white as a new drink: "some of our customers have been selling it for months," reported a supplier from Sussex, "and this is out in the sticks!" A one-man operator in Wales said: "I have been selling the flat white since I opened in January, 2009." (This magazine first came across it in 2002, when meeting the bean importer Steve Hurst of Mercanta in a suburban café. The owner came over in a tizzy, saying she had been asked for a flat white, and what to do? To be honest, we didn't know, but Steve put her right).



Flat white latte art: 'it's a question of interpretation, mate...'

By March, everyone was talking about the 'flatie'. Lavazza issued a notice on how to make it using the A Modo Mio capsule system; one trade body appealed for help from any member who knew how to make it.

The two giants' interpretations of a flat white recipe differed; one of them, in attempting to describe its milk technique, even pinched word-for-word a description from this magazine several months previously, which came from an interview with the Sacred café in Soho.

As soon as both major chains had launched, other members of the trade were quick to go out and sample their efforts.

"We have seen a masterclass in destroying something so good in the space of a few weeks," reported one. An importer of one of the world's most famous Italian espresso machines said: "The staff were ill-

prepared, and struggled to achieve a not-so-good interpretation of a flat white, even allowing for some subjectivity."

Costa, to its credit, was as always very quick with its promotional work, and its posters showed a drink with an impressive latte art topping. This in itself caused a storm.

At different ends of the country, senior but mischievous trade marketing men went into Costa and sent back drinks which did not look just like the one on the poster. One was told by the barista: 'it's a question of interpretation, mate...'

Possibly the best flat white story was reported by a managing director on yet another investigative mission. He was told by a Starbucks barista that the idea of a flat white being an antipodean drink is nonsense: 'the flat white started in Britain, was stolen by the Aussies, and now Starbucks has brought it back.'

The use of a not-quite Australian celebrity to star at one chain's launch was derided in the press; one chain decided to invite the press to learn how to make espresso coffee, but sent an invitation to a barista who actually holds two British championship titles and one world title!

It has all been extremely entertaining. But has it done the trade's reputation any good?

If the major chains had been willing to accept that they were following a trend begun elsewhere, they might have been greeted with some acknowledgement for keeping up with the times. But it is simply not in the giants' nature to accept that anybody could possibly have done anything before them... for once, their publicists' fantasy worlds went too far. By contrast, Tariq Affara at Coffee Republic phrased his launch very carefully, offering 'a version of the flat white'. He avoided any question of competing for authenticity, saying: "It is a different experience from the others - we are proud of it, and we think it will appeal to a broad range of coffee drinkers."

If others had taken this more modest view, the trade's PR work on the 'flatie' might have been much more credible.

But not half as much fun... and it might not have won so much public attention.



No shortage of new ideas!

We have always enjoyed inspiration and innovation in the coffee trade. They don't always have to be big ideas to be profitable or attention-getting! Here is a round-up of our recent favourites...

Few things frustrate café owners more than takeaway cups - and, to be fair, few things exasperate cup makers more than café owners who don't think fully about their choice of cups.

The whole question has come up again with the arrival of a quite unusual takeaway cup produced by Cup Print of Ennis, County Clare, in response to a request by Coffee Angel of Dublin, a notable café and mobile caterer.

Karl Purdy of Coffee Angel said: "I want a unique take-away cup that not only reflects the quality of our coffee, and that our customers will enjoy both the look and feel of. I want a cup that embraces the total sensory experience; one that the customer is proud to hang on to for as long as there was coffee in the cup."

The answer came from work between Karl, designer Oran Day, and Terry Fox of Cup Print, who tells us he has used production methods never

New textures on the takeaway

before seen on a paper cup, although they are familiar in traditional high-quality printing. The result is a cup with an embossed oval pattern on the outer wall, and a clear gloss foil stamp over the company's logo, which appears to make the logo stand out.

"Because we are a sheet-fed printer, we have a range of machinery different to others," Terry Fox told us. "Some date back to letterpress days but have been especially converted to foil stamping and embossing, as on the Coffee Angel cup. It was interesting to push the limitations of cup manufacturing to new heights - the final result is a never-before take-away paper cup, which captures the essence and quality of the coffee within it. It makes the customer believe that they have just

purchased something unique."

In his conventional cup business, Terry Fox specialises in extremely low-run, quick-delivery custom-print work. This is a service that several of the big brands in England have promoted recently.

"Short run cups suit us more than any other cup manufacturer, because we print everything sheet-fed litho, whilst others use reel-fed flexo/gravure.

"This means they use a large roll of paper and they have to usually run a whole roll because it's difficult to stop in the middle of a roll and set up a new job. Ours also prints at higher resolution, and higher quality.



"It's easy for us to chop and change our run lengths. I have even done a run of 100 x 5 cup designs!

"Pricing is simple - set-up charge of £130, no matter what the design is. Then around £37 per case of 500, reducing as the quantity increases.

"When we hear how long people are waiting for cup delivery, we find it ridiculous."

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One of the big headaches with the takeaway coffee phenomenon is the disposal of paper cups. One figure says that paper coffee cups account for 4.5 million tonnes of worldwide landfill each year, and there have been several moves to encourage consumers to turn to re-usable flasks.

The KeepCup is promoted as a 'barista-standard takeaway coffee cup', with advantages for both consumer and retailer. It is stackable, it seals, can be cleaned in a dishwasher, is microwaveable and unbreakable, and is recyclable after a lifecycle of three years. It is low-energy manufacture.

"The main reason the 'travel mug' concept continually fails, is because they are not designed for espresso coffee," the company's Stu Forsyth told us. "They are badly designed, bulky, don't seal, are eye-wateringly ugly, and horrible to drink from, and are an enormous headache for any busy café - the barista does not like being faced with travel mugs of all different sizes and shapes. Ours was designed after considering all the interest groups - the coffee maker, the café owner, and the consumer." The interesting feature of the cup is the lid closure - it is a simple rotating closure, which clicks either into the sip-through hole, or a little further round, into a locked-open slot.

Coming to Britain soon is a unique hot-drink closure. It is the Swedish-made MummyMug, invented by a mother who was worried about the danger of scalding to young children. So she invented the MummyMug lip-activated lid. When the mug is full, the lid is screwed on; the pressure of the drinker's top lip against the top of the lid causes the valve to open. The valve automatically closes up after every sip



The lower pic shows the sip-through, click-held in the open position



This little item came to us from the tea company Mighty Leaf. It's designed by For Life of California, who make an extremely wide and interesting collection of tea pots and infusers. This is a single-mug brewer for loose-leaf tea - there's a mesh bottom to the basket, which has a silicon-covered grip handle, and also a storage tray. The whole thing is dishwasher-safe and microwave-safe, and is boxed as a gift item.





Export sales for cream tea in a box

There have been one or two attempts in the past to serve a takeaway cream tea in a box - but none has had the effect of the new Tregothnan one. England's only commercial tea plantation has just sent six thousand of them to Japan!

It is known that the Japanese love the combination of tea, scones, jam and clotted cream, so garden manager Jonathan Jones and his team worked to pack all the ingredients into a box. "The cream is the trickiest part," he told us, "but we can freeze it, and then for three days it has a shelf life as if it were fresh."

An intriguing promotional idea from Tregothnan is its move to take over the Tolverne tea room, which is a smuggler's cottage right on the Cornish coast. The ultimate aim is to create the first British 'tea centre', both an educational and commercial project - quite literally, the public will be able to see tea bushes growing, as they drink the end product.



How many menu items from one tea?

A great business idea, says Java Republic of Dublin, is to achieve an edge and better margin by devising multiple uses for one storeroom product. The roaster and tea merchant has come up with ideas for speciality summer tea recipes, featuring one tea, served four different ways.

The first use, clearly, is a speciality tea in a tall latte glass, to make best use of the colour. Leave the unusual handcrafted tea-bag in view, says Java's Tessa van Rensburg - unlike big-brand teabags, it adds interest. Then take the same tea, and brew in a pot for two, and either serve (demonstrating good value for money) or cool and put into the fridge. Then serve in a tall glass with lots of ice or crushed ice, a few slices of lemon and/or orange and a straw. Or, as an additional option, serve in a glass jug for more than one customer, with lots of ice and slices of lemon or oranges. Or, make a special menu feature - two Java Republic blood orange tea-bags, brewed (1140ml), and cooled. To serve, add one litre freshly-squeezed orange juice, mix with chilled tea, and top with roughly-cut mint leaves. With added orange slices, serve singly in tall glass, or in a jug for four, or even add a shot of vodka for a cocktail. All possible from just one stock item - and the same, says Tessa, goes for her wild berry tea, lemon green, and even works with wild rooibos.

National Trust takes on espresso bike

The idea of the pedal-powered espresso pushbike has had some recent success.

Bikecaffe has become affiliated with the National Trust, and now has a bike in Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire, frequently used as Hogwarts school in the Harry Potter films. A trial in an adventure park has shown that the espresso bike can cope with holiday traffic - "now we are using Origin coffee, we can change the face of coffee quality at theme parks and beaches," says the company. "No more cups of muddy water for the parents while the kids ride the rollercoaster!"



There have been no end of attempts to combine the coffee trade and the ice-cream business - the Italians do it superbly, of course, but the Brits don't seem to have always found the knack.

Now, the New Forest Ice Cream company says it has come up with a practical way of working the product for coffee houses, and argues that ice-cream is a two-way impulse buy - when a child wants an ice-cream, the chances are that the adult will stop for a coffee. When the adult stops for a coffee, and a snack, the ice-cream is a very likely add-on, at maybe £1.50 a scoop, with a GP of around 80 per cent.



The key to the whole idea, says director Christina Veal, is not to see ice-cream as an isolated product line, but as a planned complement to what a coffee-house already offers.

Profitable and in vogue – the cupcake phenomenon

We have been intrigued to read of the development of the cupcake as a fashion item, and wondered if they translated into something saleable in catering. They cropped up in the product list of the Handmade Cake Company last autumn, and quite notably there were two recent references in the details of the Tea Guild's recent awards: the Athenaeum predicted that in 2010, "cupcakes will continue to be the biggest thing in pastries", and Tiny Tim's (in Kent) also referred to "the the trend for cupcakes during 2009".

Early this year, the *Times* reported that celebrities are cupcakes fans: Posh Spice was bought high-class cupcakes for her birthday, both Madonna and Nelson Mandela ordered cupcakes for their respective birthday parties, and Google reported that 'cupcakes' is the busiest recipe search term in the UK.



Handmade Cake's cupcakes

The key difference between a cupcake and a fairy cake is, we are told, in the topping - cupcakes are generously topped, and twice the size of a fairy cake. In America, where they are very fashionable, the toppings are thought to be far too sickly for British tastes.

Why are cupcakes in vogue, and how should a coffee-house or tea-room operator regard them, strategically?

"Cupcakes are working because they offer something that isn't brown, as most cakes are," replies Simon Law of Handmade Cakes. "They are smaller portions, and are generally portable - price is also generally lower than a 'wedge'. Ideally they should be presented on a cupcake stand, rather than in a glass cabinet, as you don't get the visual effects, and perspective.

"We think that prices up to £1.80 will work depending on location. Probably the majority of our customers are pricing at about £1.60 for an eat-in cupcake. We do have a customer in Buxton who is boxing them up in packs of four as take-home presents."

The Handmade Cake trade offer is of a several collections. The 'classic mixed' collection, which is 16 cupcakes, four each of chocolate, raspberry but-tercream, toffee and carrot. All of these, says Simon Law, are based on classic British cakes which he has been selling to the trade in 10-inch size for many years.

The 'naturally pretty vanilla cupcake' collection is of pink, light green, yellow and a marbled pink-and-white icing, with natural sprinkles and hand-piped but-tercream icing. The fruit and carrot collection is lemon, raspberry buttercream, blueberry and carrot.

"The cupcakes look very pretty and taste as good as they look. The sponges are real scratch-baked sponges and the icings are proper buttercream or cream cheese and lemon on the carrot cupcake. Please believe us when we say that the prettiness of the cakes is not achieved by the use of unpleasant additives. It is not. The colours and decorations are natural."

As with other Handmade Cake products, cupcakes arrive frozen. This has caused a problem with the blueberry - the company has struggled to find a blueberry which looks good after freezing and defrosting. "A single frozen blueberry on top wrinkled very quickly, so didn't look great," explains Simon Law. "So we decided to leave the blueberry cupcake 'bare'!"

Here is an extremely unusual idea. It's the Presso, a manual espresso maker with a double-lever downward action... rather like those corkscrews where you push down both sides to lever the cork out of the bottle.

In this case, it is a similar action which completes the extraction of the espresso. It comes from a London design agency, and is produced in polished, high-quality aluminium with a clear plastic chamber. Heated water goes into the chamber, the arms are raised, and that allows the water to fall on to the grounds; lowering the arms then forces the water through the grounds. It retails at around £80.00.





Lincoln and York completes its biodegradable coffee packs

The question of environmentally-acceptable coffee packaging has been a fraught one for a long time - however, we have heard that a new range of biodegradable packaging from the roaster Lincoln and York is now ready for launch. (We had heard all kinds of tales about practical experiments in biodegradability, not least with items being deposited in flower beds outside the director's window and dug up periodically!)

A major issue, says the company, has been the achievement of a biodegradable packaging which requires no compromise on quality, and the selected result is a two-layer structure of metalized cellophane and a sealing layer of corn and potato starch. It comes in a transparent or 'metalized' finish, both of which are compostable.

(It has been said, in the cellulose film industry, that if someone claimed to have discovered a packaging film that could be produced in almost any colour, permeable to moisture but a barrier to bacteria, anti-static, heat-resistant, and easy to tear while being dimensionally stable, most manufacturers would be impressed. Cellophane, made from wood pulp from renewable forests, has in fact been around since 1933 - but some forms of packaging made from it have, hitherto, used additional non-biodegradable fabrics).

Lincoln & York reports that the metalized packaging decomposes within one year, and the transparent version decomposes much quicker. However, the packs do keep coffee fresh for quite long enough for use in catering and foodservice.

Watch out for some new custom-branded, individually-wrapped 14gm espresso pods from the same company.



Lincoln and York's James Sweeting has been working on packaging advances for some years

Show off that Great Taste flash

We have been getting, from the Guild of Fine Foods, some indications of the value of displaying the Great Taste awards logo. In spite of our asking, the information remains anecdotal, without any firm figures - but the Guild say they now have a fair amount of evidence to suggest that showing the awards sticker works. Recent interesting examples include Sweet Freedom, the syrup-like sweetener which can be offered as a 'luxury alternative' to sugar or honey - it's much less in calories, is fine for diabetics, and also OK for vegans, which honey is not (we didn't know that!) and apparently the Manoir au Quat' Saisons uses it. (It's one of those upside-down containers, and as with many sweeteners, we think it's worth experimenting to find the ideal dose). We have come across some other notable Great Taste items recently - Robert Wilson's Ceylon Teas are a rather special range, and while his Lover's Leap tea from Mahagastota



Great Taste logos on Sweet Freedom (with its cap dispense mechanism) and Robert Wilson teas

is not exactly rare, it has a good story to put on a menu. You can guess the plot - royal prince and low-caste girl, running away to escape the anger of the king, pursued by soldiers up a mountain, take the only way out, six thousand feet the quick way, passing the tea gardens on their way down. Wonderful material for a tea menu!

(Another brand making good use of displaying the Great Taste logo is the Canton Tea Company, which is actually based in Twickenham. Some extremely rare teas here - typically, the Pouchong, exclusive to the company, and grown high on the slopes by farmer Xu and his family - another great story to put on a tea menu!)

There is no structured research on the benefits of showing the sticker, says John Farrand of the Guild of Fine Food - but all the anecdotal research from stockists says to use the sticker, and use it big, because it does draw attention.



Giant moves in custard creams...

The concept of the 'limited edition' cookie has taken an unexpected turn. Byron Bay launched the idea a year ago as an attention-getting selling-point - but to the company's surprise, one of the range has had to become 'unlimited'.

This month, the strawberries and clotted cream cookie, which was supposed to have a life of only four months, becomes part of the full all-year range. This product has become acknowledged as one of the 'good ideas' of last year.

The cookie featured pieces of real English strawberries, clotted cream from dairies local to the bakehouse and chunks of white chocolate, which created a distinctive light biscuit. The idea was to feature it as a summer 'special'. "We had no idea that it would become such a popular line," says Byron Bay's Mark Perrin. "At the end of the four months, people were asking when we would be bringing it back."

One of the best ideas, which came from an independent tea-room, was to serve the cookie as a set dish with an appropriate tea at an all-in price. "The best tea to serve with a strawberries and cream cookie would be a light and fragrant one - Darjeeling, Earl Grey and Lady Grey," suggests Paul Maxwell of distributor Beyond the Bean. The next limited edition cookie will be lemon and macadamia nut cheesecake.

Peros is after the same tea-and-biscuit market with its One World Fairtrade crumbles, an addition to the One World bakery selection. These are half-flan and half-cake, with a sponge base, fruit filling and a crumble topping. There are three varieties, and they are individually wrapped for retail sale as well.

Meanwhile, watch for a really unusual idea in biscuits from Paterson Arran. This is the Bronte Giant Cookies range, which now includes custard creams and bourbon. These are big biscuits, with a big individual price - maybe as high as 95p, says the company's Jerome Wright.



From the top: Paterson Arran's giant custard cream, Peros' crumble, and Byron Bay's big strawberry success

Rarities and specialities in tea

It has to be said that we get a lot of readers who think there's nothing interesting happening in tea... in fact, the tea sector moves rather faster than coffee does.

Here's a new 'in' drink, which Teapigs refers to as 'the superhero of modern tea', having 137 times the antioxidant value of normal tea. It's Matcha, which is organic green tea leaves ground into a concentrated powder. Its grown undercover in Japan, and very slowly ground by granite. It is said to raise energy levels while keeping you calm, and to give a healthy metabolism boost. In the States you'll find it in cafes, health shops and smoothie bars, and film stars like it. To prepare, 1gm in a shot glass, 30ml water, and whisk. That's it.

Teapigs has also brought out some very neat individual tea-bag wrappers - the brown paper look. It works very effectively.



Sportsmen like a shot of beetroot

We have for a long time been intrigued by the concept of vegetable-based soft drinks - there are a vast number of unlikely vegetables which now turn up in bottled form. The pioneer of the sector is Lawrence Mallinson, who tells us that he is launching 'his maddest idea yet' in the collection of James White vegetable drinks - it's the shot-size (7cl) concentrated beetroot juice. Don't laugh, because beetroot is a big health item, and he's already supplying many of our Olympic athletes and even the entire England rugby team with it. "It is delicious, but neither smells nor tastes like beetroot juice," he tells us reassuringly. (It was he who invented Big Tom, the modern spicy tomato juice).





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Great shakes...

A quite surprisingly good performer in coffee house turnover has turned out to be, of all things, the milkshake. One of the significant smaller coffee-bar chains, not wishing to be named, has told us that shakes vary from three to five per cent of total sales, dependant upon the season. However, one new player in the market recently entered the sector with the aggressive challenge that existing suppliers were not catering for the adult shake market - which in turn raises the question of what the market is for shakes, and how the adult sector is catered for.

"The appeal of the shake is simple - it's long and it's cold!" says Paul Ettinger of Caffe Nero. "Customers are very happy with it as a change from coffee and tea, because the shake has changed a lot and is much more interesting and geared to the adult market. It's the standard of the flavour which has had an impact - today, we have genuinely good flavours. It is now definitely an adult product.

"It is a high selling price, but you have to remember that there are several ingredients, so the margin is less than for espresso."

However, says Gary McGann of Beyond the Bean, you can work on ingredients you already stock.



The Shakeaway method - blending branded chocolate bars

"Many café operators are discovering the concept of a vanilla frappe, ice, and a concentrated flavour, which comes out like a posh milkshake. It works with all our fruit smoothie bases: you can get a result that tastes like a Solero (the ice-cream on a stick which has an iced fruit puree or sorbet covering). Essentially, the idea is to take ingredients you have already. The cost price is very low - probably cheaper than preparing a standard smoothie, and it sells for just as much.

"However, I have seen a shake concept which offers any chocolate bar you can think of, blended into a shake. They sell at up to £3.75 - I didn't think anyone would pay it, but they do!"

That high-priced operator was almost certainly the Shakeaway chain, where founder Rob Hazell told us that what they do is certainly an adult product.

"Our audience starts at around early teens and the bulk of them go through to late 20s. You are speaking to the people who created this sector! We are the ones who 're-invented' shakes ten years ago using real products, moving away from the previous idea of powders and syrups, and that is what made them more 'adult'."

Decades ago, shakes were more of a 'craft-made' item. What is the practical way of preparing a shake at speed, in a high-footfall area?

"Milk and ice-cream as a base, then the products," said Rob Hazell. "However, they have to be made to order in a 'production line' while being fully visible to the customer and maintaining 'theatre'." Traditionally, the shake was presented in a tall glass, but in the modern world, that has been superseded by the familiar takeaway cup. This is what Shakeaway uses, but another claimant to the pioneer of the branded takeaway shake is Dinkum, the Birmingham company which has always argued the case for a heavily-branded, recognizable, shake brand.

How high can pricing go?

"Since our re-brand, our trade customers can now charge more, and they are doing so. We used to say 'double the price of a can of Coke in your area', and that has always been a good rule of thumb. Now we say double it, and add 10-20 per cent. The profit is over four times that of a can of coke, and there is no waste at all, unlike other shake systems.

"In shakes, branding is king - when a customer leaves a site with a can of Coke, no-one knows where it has come from. But when your customer walks down the street with a Shmoo, other people soon get to know where such a distinctive drink comes from."

A quite remarkable idea in restaurant coffee service has been described in Los Angeles. It has been described by Jay Weston, a California restaurant critic, and we think it is actually his own idea.

Like so many people, Jay is displeased with the standard of restaurant coffee. He has now suggested the perfect way for restaurants to serve the drink. His concept is that the coffee is served with the dessert, and that the waiter offers each diner the opportunity to match their coffee to the dessert they have chosen. And then, the waiter brews each coffee, at table, in a French press.

What coffee goes perfectly with chocolate, he asks. Which matches a fruity dessert? He suggests that Sumatran goes best with a dark chocolate pastry, and Colombian or Panamanian suits a light fruit dessert, and has other matching ideas.

Ideally, the waiter wheels out a small coffee cart, with the different bags of freshly-ground coffee and the makings for it on the cart.

The cart carries a little burner supporting a glass pot of water simmering just under the boil. After the diner has selected his dessert and coffee, the waiter measures two level spoonfuls of the appropriate coffee into the French press, adds six ounces of hot water, mixes it once and then lets it sit for exactly two minutes... with, for theatre, an egg-timer or hourglass provided. Once the two minutes are up, the dessert is served, and the waiter ceremonially presses the plunger and serves the coffee.

At a stroke, suggests Jay Weston, both the reputation of restaurant coffee quality and service is transformed!



On this magazine, we are extremely careful not to show any preference... but still, there are always some products we think really are just that bit special.

Here's just a couple, which we think you might be able to use:



The use of hand-made chocolates can be extremely effective (and profitable) if you use them in the right way. We saw these only after Christmas, and haven't been able to bring it to you until now. Brodies of Edinburgh is not just a coffee roaster and tea blender, but a designer of handmade chocolates - look at that little Christmas-pud item on the top of a box of tea. If they are making these again this year, plan well in advance to get them.



And the second is special, but may be extremely rare. We got it from Halssen and Lyon, the great Hamburg tea merchant. It's a tea liqueur... and we've never tasted anything quite like it. Slightly greenish. Serve in a liqueur glass, but in small portions - because it's 28 per cent alcohol!

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Twist and press

We have been asked on several occasions about the make-up of two products we have featured in these pages before - the MyPressi Twist and the Aeropress.

The Twist is the one which is intended as a personal portable espresso maker, but which some chefs have said has a future as a theatrical way of serving espresso at table. The construction is essentially a ball shape with a handle. There is a filter basket, as you would normally expect with an espresso process. That basket sits in the recess in the lower half of the ball (pic 1). The upper part of the ball fits on with a very firm rotate-and-click action (2). Hot water goes in through a lid on the upper part of the bowl (3). On the underside of the whole ball there is a fairly conventional espresso spout (4). At the end of the handle, is a socket for the gas cartridge (5). The trigger under the handle (6) begins the extraction and flow - expect a conventional 25 seconds or so.

The Aeropress has aroused vast interest for easy serving of filter coffees, although the word 'filter' can give a wrong impression - a properly, cleanly-filtered coffee is an entirely different drink from a casually-filtered one. Think of a cafetiere, but far better. The process is much the same, in that manual pressure forces the brewed coffee through a filter and into the cup. Several measures are possible, from 'shot' to 'carafe' (see numbers on upper pic). The lower part is the brewing chamber, the upper part is the piston or plunger, and the filter is right at the base (lower pic - a paper disc filter sits inside the black plastic holder). The key is careful, gentle, pressure - some cafes have even built special holders to hold the entire thing firm above the cup.



Use that Aeropress on truly great coffees...

The idea of the 'coffee menu' is gaining ground, but it is remarkable how many caterers still use 'coffee' as a generic term. And while the supply side of the trade gets ever more excited about new and interesting coffees, many caterers say they are happy with their existing house blend, and do not want to consider new ideas in coffee at all, even as an extension of their menu. Do new coffees really attract interest from the general customer?

"When the customer is interested in choosing between chicken or beef, fried or boiled, starter or pud, wine or beer, then surely you would think they are interested in a choice of coffee," remarks Simon Wakefield of DR Wakefield, the noted green-bean importers. "Most consumers probably think the only option is decaf! If you add the origin option, I'm sure most consumers would begin to make choices. Will it increase business? Well, it sure won't lose it, it may well increase it, and in my opinion it would be daft not to do it!"

As more caterers are offering a filter option, and some offering specialist single-origins through Aeropress and the like, what 'interesting' coffees would be suitable and practical for an attention-getting filter coffee menu, and easily available from roasters?

"We've seen a lot of success with single-origin, specifically for single farm or producer group. One is Podocarpus from Ecuador (a rainforest national park producing a coffee described as having 'a certain buttery maltiness and a magical sparkle of treacle toffee and bonfires'), with Santuario bourbon or typica from Colombia, and surprisingly, single estate from Kenya is starting to come back. You can find them at Atkinsons in Lancaster, DJ Miles in Somerset, Northern Tea in Chesterfield, Grumpy Mule in Huddersfield - all have success with various good coffees on these origins."

Is it worth the caterer's while seeking them out?

"If you are prepared to market your coffee and tell the consumer about it, you will benefit from a better-educated, more discerning customer who is demanding a better coffee... and willing to pay for it."



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