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# Boughton's

## COFFEE HOUSE



Scoop Malone, the coffee trade's top writer, now reports for you every month!

June 2011

# HSE consults the trade on cafe machine safety

The Health and Safety Executive has begun the deeper part of its investigation into the explosion of an espresso machine in a café last year. While the remains of the machine itself have been in the hands of the HSE laboratory technicians for some time, as indeed have new and unused versions of the same equipment, the authority is now conducting a wide consultation exercise around the industry, speaking to several experienced companies about the way that espresso machines are imported, sold, handled, maintained, and inspected. *Coffee House* is able to report that the first of these meetings have already taken place, although we are not allowed to report which companies are assisting with the work.

HSE inspector Dennis McWilliam has told *Coffee House* that he has already discovered a lack of information about the subject – it has recently even been reported that two separate distribution companies believed that pressure-vessel inspections for espresso machines were simply a commercial requirement for insurance companies, and not a matter of law. The inspector has already acknowledged that guidance on the matter is not clear.

"We have already exposed a great gap in information, and as far as the coffee trade was concerned, existing HSE guidance was not user-friendly. We are encouraged now to write things in words of one syllable."

The lack of information may, it has been suspected, also occur in the supply chain.

"I have received the impression that manufacturers are not handing out as much technical information as they might. The most important sheet of paper, which is absolutely critical and which cafe operators should keep in their safe, is one that nobody's heard of!"

This magazine believes that mem-



Dennis McWilliam

*"We have already exposed a great gap in information"*  
- HSE

bers of the coffee trade will now be invited to take part in the drafting of new, clear guidelines for café operators on the legal requirements surrounding espresso machines.

Information from the investigation has also revealed a lack of knowledge on the part of local authority departments who should be regulating safety matters. A sample of environmental officers from three countries - England, Wales and Scotland - has revealed that many of them did not know that an espresso machine contains a water boiler, or that it therefore comes under a safety Act.

*Coffee House* magazine asked several notable machine importers about the information they give out to their customers. Several replied, and the importers of Brasilia, La Cimbali, La Marzocco, and the British maker Fracino, all confirmed that they make their customers aware of the requirement, although several added that responsibility for actually carrying out the inspection and certification rests with the café operator.

Watermark, the importer of Gaggia machines, told us that the subject will form part of their distributor conference this month.

The HSE is also working on the vexed question of who can act as the 'competent person', who certifies that an espresso machine has been inspected. It is true that the definition does bring in some subjective issues which lead to different interpretation, the HSE has acknowledged.

However, the inspector added, "it might be helpful for those acting as the 'competent person' to remember that this is not civil service terminology - it is criminal law terminology, and they are the person on whose door we knock."

There is no word on when the HSE might issue any statement on the result of their investigation – far too many specialist departments are involved.

### IN THIS ISSUE...

As always, the fullest and most relevant news coverage in the cafe trade plus...

**Starbucks – where it all went wrong!**



In Howard Schultz' own story... page 5

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A great trade resource ... begins page 8

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Including some clever diversification... page 12



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## Coffee fairs attract huge interest

The unprecedented proliferation of consumer-aimed coffee shows this spring has sparked debate within the trade as to how the industry should capitalise on what is clearly a positive public interest in tea and coffee – the Bath festival, opened by celebrity chef Martin Blunos and the local mayor (above) drew over ten thousand members of the public.

Full story - back page

A couple in south Tyneside have opened a 1920s-themed coffee house - the Charleston's Coffee House in South Shields is a 75-seater in a former pub. Meanwhile, a few years down the line, the Dad's Army tea-room has opened at the TV show's own museum in Thetford. Manager Corinne Fulford tells us that her menu is "no flashy coffee makers, just NAAFI tea in brown Betty teapots, and cakes to authentic 1940s recipes, and you're lucky to get that... there's a war on, you know!"

Older readers may recall the comedienne Lucille Ball, from the days of black-and-white TV. Students in Jamestown, New York, created a giant mural of Ball's face made entirely out of cups of coffee. The cups were full (no, please don't ask us how, if it was a mural, the coffee stayed in there). The interesting thing is that the 4,000 coffee cups were filled with coffee donated by the Tim Horton's chain, and each was sponsored for \$2. That is a remarkable fund-raising idea.

The outdoorwear brand Timberland has launched a range of clothing made from recycled plastic and coffee beans. According to the maker, the coffee particles control and absorb odours, and offer UV protection thanks to coffee's ability to refract and diffuse the sun's rays.

Bottlegreen Drinks has been sold to the maker of WKD. It had previously changed hands in 2007, and was

reportedly valued at £30m.

The Sunday Club, a coffee-themed activity run by the Tapped and Packed café of London, is holding classes on cupping and home brewing - dates are 13/20/27th June, are limited to six people, and cost £25. Info: dunnefrankowski@gmail.com.

The Ministry of Defence has removed most of its coffee vending machines in a cost-cutting exercise, which one newspaper has noted is good news for coffee-houses near London's embankment, but hardly saves enough to buy a new aircraft-carrier - total savings are about half a million pounds.

The Coffee Boys, the Irish consultants, have created a new mentoring scheme. They will take on ten coffee shop owners for a one-year group consultation process with them. Details: john@thecoffeeboys.com. There is also, we learn, an idea of a TV project very similar to Gordon Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares but focused on coffee shops.

Entry numbers for the BSA's Beverage Standards awards did not reach the hundreds hoped for, but they reached something over 70, which the organisation says is a promising base to start from.

The concept of the 'limited-edition' snack has now been taken up by Tynaks of Harrogate in the Yorkshire Tea Bakery range, with the lemon cake at £1.49.

## Brewers Cup celebrates filter

**One of the most useful contests for the benefit of the entire coffee trade has been created by the SCAE, with the appearance of the Brewers' Cup.**

The interesting aspect of this contest is that contestants have to produce a coffee by some kind of filter process, and serve it to a collection of judges - however, part of the contest involves brewing a coffee provided to them, and they have to brew individually for each judge, thus proving that they can do so to a consistent standard.



*Keith O'Sullivan, winner of the Irish Brewers Cup, with part of his prize - a ceramic pigeon. No, we don't know why...*

Chemex was the brewing method most used by the competitors.

"The surprise that we all noted was always in the cup. Each of the three judges would score their own single cup. Then we would try each others' coffees and there would on occasion be a marked difference between the three! The standard was always high, though obviously some competitors were able to bring more out of their coffee than others."

In his pre-contest interview, the winner said he believes that the quality of filter/brewed coffee can be easily improved, by a couple of simple changes in technique... even in a cafetiere. The judges agreed:

"I would say that the contest has the potential to educate people as to how to get the most out of their brewed coffee. If the Brewer's Cup continues to gather steam then it could really change people's opinions that you can't have a good cup of filter coffee."

The UK equivalent is to be held on Saturday 11th June at Prufrock Coffee, Leather Lane, London. The World Brewers Cup will be at the SCAE's World of Coffee event in Maastricht, June 22-24.

The Irish contest was held in May, and the remarkable thing about it was that the winner did not come from the beverage trade. He was Keith O'Sullivan, a local politics student, although he did work in a coffee-house a few years ago.

Before the contest, he had been critical of coffees served out-of-home. He had said: "Many little things could really shake up and improve the standard... grinding fresh for filter would be a very small thing that could have a major influence on quality. Taking time to train people to do the job properly would be a giant step forward - simple things like not over-agitating a french press before you bring it to the customer. I'd never expect the average cup on the high street to be amazing, but I think 'good' is something that we could strive for."

One of the judges was Kristine Bremner from the green-bean importer Ridge and Bremner of London, who told us:

"The competitors brewed their coffee by various means, and there was a good spread of equipment used - Chemex, cafetiere, aeropress and even 'home-made' brewing apparatus. I'd lean towards saying that the

## Holy orders for the cafe trade

**The coffee house trade certainly did its bit for Christian Aid Week last month - the organisation had decided it would be a neat publicity stunt to have bishops trained as baristas. However, having done so, the charity rather lost track, and told us that they don't know how many ordained coffee-brewers they ended up with.**

From our own contacts, we find that the Bishop of Knarborough trained at Chimes café in Ripon, and said that while he prefers his coffee black, he was glad to have learned milk skills. The district chairman for York and Hull Methodists went to work at the Aroma coffee shop in Haxby, the Bishop of Pontefract went to a branch of Costa in Halifax, and Barry Cook of Café-licious in Swindon hosted his local Bishop. The Bishop of Bedford went to the town's Coffee House.

In Lancaster, Sue Steel of Atkinson's trained the Bishop of Liverpool, and dared to explain the trade espresso term 'the God shot'... fortunately, he was amused.

## Another study criticises Fairtrade

**On World Fair Trade Day in mid-May, the University of Hohenheim in Germany produced a study which concluded that farmers producing for the Fairtrade market "are more often found below the absolute poverty line than conventional producers".**

The researchers, according to the abstract of the report, say that 'certification schemes are assumed to offer higher prices and better incomes', but claims that the situation of certified smallholder coffee producers has not yet been adequately analysed. The researchers asked 327 coffee-farming households in Nicaragua about their situation, and concluded that 'although farm-gate prices of certified coffees are higher than of conventional coffees, the profitability of certified coffee production and its subsequent effect on poverty levels is not clear-cut. Certified producers are more often found below the absolute poverty line than conventional producers'. The researchers also said that organic and fair trade farmers 'have become poorer relative to conventional producers'.



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Derek Lamberton from Hampstead has designed an iPhone application for finding the best artisan coffee places in London. The 'app', which was listed as one of the *Sunday Times*' top ten, includes over 70 cafes and stalls, and information about roasteries. It is at [www.londonsbestcoffee.co.uk](http://www.londonsbestcoffee.co.uk).

A report from Cuba says that the rising price of coffee has led to the re-birth of an old-time money-saving practice - mixing coffee with roasted peas. This, apparently, is a practice which dates from the revolution in the 1950s, and gives a bitter brew which used to be drunk with a great deal of sugar.

This, we are told, only died out a few years ago, and apparently some old-time locals don't like pure coffee at all! Now, say the Cuban authorities, it is an 'unavoidable necessity' to bring back the old blend... and maybe even export it. (There is a tea equivalent, in which tea is blended with rice to bulk-up the volume. You can still get it from Teapigs, we think).

\*

At the Good Taste café in Walton, burglars broke in and took the charity collection boxes - twice in two weeks.

\*

The Cambridge press has complained that a partially-sighted man was told to leave a local café because he had his guide dog with him. The manager allegedly said: "I don't care for English law - he has to go." The Guide Dogs for the Blind association pointed him to the Equality Act 2010, which requires caterers not to discriminate against disabled people.

Meanwhile, Reuters has reported that the US government has taken Starbucks to court for firing a barista in El Paso - because she is a very short person, who asked for a stool or small stepladder to perform her job. She was allegedly fired as a potential danger to customers and workers. The incident happened in 2009, but has only just come to public attention - one of the many commentaries on the matter in America has observed that US law requires an employer 'to provide a reasonable accommodation to individuals with disabilities who are employees... unless doing so would cause an undue hardship'. The argument is that supplying a stool would not be 'undue hardship'.

Kaffeine, the very well-regarded London coffee house, has worked with Lord's cricket ground on improving its coffee - there will be both espresso and filter coffee served in a concession site branded One Tree Coffee. The name refers to the French attempt in the 1700s to take three coffee trees to Martinique. One survived - fifty years later there were 19 million producing coffee in the region (and look what happened to their cricket!)



Trade wholesaler *Beyond the Bean* has issued its annual summer drinks brochure - quirky as ever, but with many good ideas inside.

From: [www.beyondthebean.com](http://www.beyondthebean.com)

It is reported that managers in a tea plantation in China have created the most politically-incorrect job advertisement you could expect to see: potential tea-pickers must be female, must be virgins, and have a bra size of C-cup or larger. Delightfully, one trade magazine has enquired how the board were measured for their jobs.



## Kaldi

The latest in the story of Peter Andre's coffee shop, which we have followed with bated breath, is that he will launch the New York Coffee Club in East Grinstead, and another one in London in six months. We did, through his agent, invite him to the Caffe Culture show... but didn't see him there.

Costa has won a Brand of the Year prize from the Engage Awards. The citation said that Costa 'triumphed over tough competition and won overwhelming praise from a panel made up of experienced marketeers and agency chiefs for its total commitment across the business to driving sales and awareness'. So far so good. They then went on to say that Costa was applauded for 'brave thinking in a market dominated by other brands'. Kaldi has asked which brands might dominate over such a giant as Costa, without success...

We always hesitate to put out yet another kopi luwak story, but following reports that the civet cats are being factory-farmed to produce their unique coffee, we see that Indonesia's self-proclaimed King of Luwak has spoken of the degree to which his business has increased. He is reported in the country's press as saying: "In 2008, I gathered about 50 kilos of luwak beans and sold them to local distributors. In 2009, I sold 300 kilograms... in 2010, I sold 1.2 tonnes." He is now facing counterfeits - the Vietnamese have apparently devised a way of achieving a similar taste... without cats.

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Starbucks has decided to go with Barclaycard for its first venture into contactless payment technology. The idea is for the service to be available in all stores during 2012. A spokesman for the card industry said that Starbucks' take-up of the format indicates a 'tipping-point', from which contactless will now be accepted as a mainstream payment method.

Starbucks has spoken of its expansion plans for China - from 450 stores now to 1,500 by 2015.

We have often reported in the past the Canadian chain Tim Hortons, with its 'roll up the rim' contest. Inside the rim of some takeaway cups is a winning code, and some prizes are immense - there have been court cases over cups which gave a car away. The most usual prizes are free coffee and donuts, and when the chain missed its profit forecast last month, the chief executive blamed forty-seven million free prize servings. He said that more people were redeeming winning cups than paying cash for coffee and food.

Boston Tea Party, the southwestern café chain, has experimented with drama - the Metta Theatre Company toured a play round seven of the nine Boston Tea Party cafes last month, with tickets at £10 a time. The play's director said: "the vibrancy and character of all their cafes make them a perfect place for interesting theatre."

The financial press has recommended that selling Costa would be a

good move for Whitbread - the Royal Bank of Scotland analysts have been quoted as predicting that it is no longer a question of 'if' Costa will be sold off, but 'when'.

BB's Coffee and Muffins has begun a makeover of its 70-cafe estate. The first is in Watford, where the old white-on-red logo has been replaced by pink, white and black. The chain's managing director has said that one change has come from customer preference - he has been asked to make his muffins smaller! Andrew Moyes has added that he proposes to concentrate his marketing on the 18-35 age range more than the chain did before, and find more premium high street sites.

The Restoration coffee shop in Ford, Northumberland, has created a retail range of jams and preserves named after Lady Waterford, who lived in the local castle in the mid-1800s, and was an extremely famous watercolour artist.

A solar-powered coffee machine has appeared in Abu Dhabi - it was not created as a commercial project, but more as a demonstration of Concentrated Solar Power as a major future energy source. The coffee trade will recognise the brewing principle, if not the power - the apparatus consisted of a half-litre vertical water tube fitted at the centre of a solar panel. Solar energy heated the water, which rose to the top of the pipe, where it mixed with ground coffee.



Costa Coffee has opened a drive-thru site at Nottingham's Castle Marina retail park. There are to be six of these sites before the end of the year. The Nottingham one is open at least 14 hours a day, all week. Costa has designed drive-thru sites near Loch Lomond, and at Lydiard 16, just outside Swindon.

## Moves against 'clone towns'

The latest, and unexpected, turn in the continuing story of planning cases in provincial high streets is that the Association of Convenience Stores and the Campaign to Protect Rural England have joined up to lobby MPs for two amendments to the Localism Bill to give greater power to local communities, greater opportunities for local business against chains, and more protection from 'clone towns'.

They want a 'community right of appeal' to an independent inspector, and a 'retail diversity scheme' in which the decisions over retail development are controlled by local communities. The organisations say that 12,000 local retailers have closed in the last year.

By contrast, a former mayor of Guisborough has said he welcomes the proposed arrival of Costa, to join Caffe Nero and a dozen other small tea shops and cafes in the town. He said: "Guisborough is becoming more and more a tourist area as well as a good shopping centre and this will complement it. This is how communities evolve."

Costa Coffee is set to open a store in Dalton Road, Barrow in Furness. The local press reported that the traders' association said that most local businesses approved... which was curious, because the previous week they had quoted the same association as saying 'oh no, not another one'.

Rather better were the quotes from two local café-owners: Tony Goulding, of the Coffee Bean, said: "It is more competition for us, but I am confident in our coffee," and rather more aggressively, Mike Stephenson of the Last Resort Coffee Shop said: "the local coffee shops offer a good standard of quality - they might find it tough coming here!"

Costa has also submitted an application for new signage and a pavement-seating area in Lutterworth, on the site of a former carpet shop. The chamber of trade said that while it was pleased to see an empty shop unit being filled, they did not believe the town could sustain another coffee shop.

However, a Costa application for out-

door chairs in Bangor caused a council debate, in which the town clerk said that if one business was allowed exterior furniture, the town would become full of it. One councillor said that police had referred to 'the blind law' over pavement obstructions.

Elsewhere, traders in Ely complained that Caffe Nero was altering a retail shop into a café without permission. The local planning department was reported as saying they could not take action on alterations - only if and when a café is opened.

Our usual expert on this subject, Chris Green of DPP, tells us that this is a curiosity of the regulations which often leads to the familiar local claims that a café owner is 'flouting the rules and opening without a by-your-leave'.

"The big problem is that an operator is never quite sure, until opening, how a café will trade - the balance of A1/A3 usage could be quite different from what was expected. There is also a grey area in which you can trade with a small element of 'ancillary' A3, under A1 consent, perhaps if your eat-in trade is minimal.

"Of course, nobody can define what is considered 'ancillary', and with A3 consent taking possibly six months, this is why a trader will often want to get going and see how trade turns out... and may consider that a reasonable response to accusations of opening up without permission."

In Bristol, Boston Tea Party is opening its tenth café in Stokes Croft, the area which suffered a recent outbreak of rioting following the arrival of Tesco in the area. Owner Sam Roberts says that he expects a small local chain, with a policy of local sourcing, to be made rather more welcome.

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One of the most difficult things for the trade press is to write about Starbucks. On the one hand, it's easy to take cheap shots at them, and on the other it is only right to acknowledge that without them, many of us would not have the jobs we do in the coffee trade.

In *Onward*, the latest book by the brand's leader Howard Schultz, he takes the reader on an extremely detailed journey through the events of early 2008, when he accepted that Starbucks was out of control, took back the position of chief executive, and attempted to turn the ship around.

The great thing which can be said about Starbucks is that Schultz is not afraid of recognising a mistake, and changing direction. One has to admire the sheer courage of 'mid-course correction', when he could more easily have sold up and run.

Schultz is in many ways the embodiment of the 'any one can do it' ideal, the American Dream. He came from the housing estates, and rose through determination – so much so that the original founders of Starbucks couldn't handle his ambition, and sold out.

And although it is easy to take the mick out of the often self-righteous Starbucks attitude, there is always the suggestion that they may just be exhibiting that open honesty of approach which is a distinctively American trait, and which may just seem odd in Europe. And this is an extremely honest book.

Starbucks has always had a problem with communication. Its public pronouncements are always in its own highly-polished and slightly surreal corporate language - Starbucks seems to live in a fairytale, a make-believe Disney-esque community of blue skies, white picket fences and green lawns, and a smiling barista in a homely home-town Starbucks, proud to be part of a corporation universally loved and respected; a kindly old grandfather figure of a brand which keeps the rest of the coffee trade straight through benevolent wisdom.

How does Starbucks see itself? We learn a lot from what Howard Schultz writes, not least his remark that "Icons exert a cultural authority..."

He quotes the attributes of "community, respect, dignity, humour, accountability, humanity - it is our mission to ensure that the world sees us through these lenses." Yet this is the company which threatens a lawsuit at the drop of a hat, and which has recently come into disrepute for allegedly firing a disabled person for not being able to reach the counter.

It is contradictions like this that makes one begin to suspect an imbalance between the values of the people at the top, and what lower-down executives actually do and say. It is a problem in many corporations, and generally happens when the middle rank, who are lucky enough to find themselves in authority without having actually built it, get too big for their boots.

And yet, some odd opinions do come right from the top.

In Schultz' *Seven Big Moves* strategy of early 2008, the first 'big move' statement repeated his belief that "Starbucks had to advance its position as the undisputed coffee authority". This was 2008 – but who at the time saw Starbucks as the undisputed authority on coffee? And at a business summit, one Starbucks vice-president said: "the world is looking to Starbucks to set the new standard, yet again." Where do they get these ideas?

But we must not sneer at all this, because there is another viewpoint. If you really believe in your view of things, then you have more chance of succeeding with it.

It was with this kind of belief that Howard Schultz built the company, but the situation when he took control back was, indeed, dire. And he does not shrink from detailing it: he says that "it is my manner to speak from the heart, usually unedited," and that is the way he tells the story of descent into near-disas-



## Starbucks - the journey out of chaos

ter. "It was slow, quiet, incremental, like a single loose thread that unravels a sweater inch by inch..."

In the good years, a Starbucks store had to bring in two dollars for every dollar invested in it; historically, every store in the US took about a million dollars a year. By 2008, that wasn't happening: "adding insult to injury, many under-performing stores had been opened in the last two years, revealing a lack of discipline... a sign of our hubris born of a sense of invincibility." Seventy per cent of the stores that were closed had been opened during the brand's most aggressive growth period, in the past three years.

"If not checked," Schultz writes perceptively, "success has a way of covering up small failures..."

The high street coffee trade will be fascinated by his frank admission of staff standards: "in the name of efficiency, our company had created bad habits among baristas. New hires were handed a ring-binder of rules and techniques and told 'read it'. Not only had we not trained many of them to steam milk correctly, but some had been letting large pitchers sit and then re-steaming" (what an admission!).

Starbucks was opening stores so fast that existing managers were regularly sent off to handle new openings, and so a new barista could find he had a new boss every few weeks. "I had long maintained that our training was inadequate," says Schultz, although we do not learn why he put up with it.

The point of the book is in what he did, when he returned as CEO. The degree to which Schultz had to rebuild the infrastructure of Starbucks makes for gripping reading, even if out of disbelief: in 2008, the computers in Starbucks stores had no modern graphics or multi-media ability – they could not handle spreadsheets, Powerpoint, or word-processing. They could not show video - which was why, when Starbucks did its immense corporate re-training day, and closed every one of seven thousand stores early for a training session, head office had to send every single store a DVD player. Incredibly, store managers could not e-mail out.

The instore point-of-sale system was archaic. It required a customer to state their order, size, drink name, extra shot, milk choice - in a particular order. If the customer gave the data in a different order, the order had to be started all over again.

The stock-control system was so bad that the chance of any store getting a complete delivery from the central warehouse was 35 per cent. Dozens of stores ran out of bottled water at the same time, and

so did the warehouse... because nobody knew who was supposed to order it.

All these unbelievable situations are honestly laid out, as indeed are the millions of dollars spent on simply putting mistakes right.

Equally honest are the admissions of what happened when he laid off thousands of staff, and his middle managers had to do the firing. At a big meeting later, one stood up and had the nerve to say, in front of the entire management population: "we took the hit for you - we are not prepared to go through that again."

Howard Schultz records the stories of subsequent projects at length - the story of the launch of Via, Starbucks' instant coffee is fascinating. (With regard to the taste of Starbucks coffee, one fascinating opinion is: "people thought Starbucks was too intense, compared to the lesser-quality coffee they'd grown up drinking in diners... this was a reason many perceived Starbucks coffee as 'burnt' instead of 'bold'.")

And although he admits readily to changing his views on size ("large numbers which once captivated me - 40,000 stores! - are not what matter") one of his successes in the re-build programme was of big numbers indeed.

In the autumn of 2008, he decided to take the annual staff convention, which brought \$30 million into the local economy of the town that won the right to host it, to New Orleans, which had still not recovered from the hurricane. If this was a rah-rah feel-good corporate party, said Schultz, it would fail. If it was boring lectures and seminars, it would fail. For four days, a couple of thousand Starbucks staff put in five hours' work a day helping to restore New Orleans; Schultz himself was on house-painting with his store managers. The effort was so huge, the town didn't have the tools available, so Starbucks had to ship in lorry-loads of shovels and paint as well.

Now, that is admirable. For a company on the rocks, that must have been an inspirational occasion.

Reading Schultz on Starbucks is rather like hearing Prince Charles speak on architecture - the sentiments are wonderful, but there is always the suspicion that they will get blocked by the system.

In the case of Starbucks, Mr Schultz invented the system, but one does get the feeling that the sheer size of it nearly beat him.

For managers in the coffee trade, this really is an extremely instructive read.

*Onward* by Howard Schultz, published Wiley. ISBN 978-1-119-97723-0



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The subject of precision temperature brewing has come up again, with several companies at last month's Caffe Culture show taking the opportunity to stress the importance of knowing the effect temperature has on taste. Two of them stressed that they were raising the subject with no view of suggesting that any temperature is 'right', but more to make sure that café owners appreciated what a difference in temperature can make to a tea or coffee.

At Bunn, David Locker brewed the same one, three separate ways, and invited visitors to taste the difference.

"We did not want to say that any one was 'best', we just wanted to illustrate the differences.

"Brew A was a deliberate 'run of the mill' brew - 60gm per litre, at 93c, for four minutes. Absolutely standard, nothing clever. It was light in body, but slightly lacking... though still a sight better than average hotel coffee, at 28gm per litre!

"Brew B was at four and a half minutes, pulse-brew - that is, introducing the water gradually, which makes the coffee rise and fall, and increases the contact time. This tasted deeper, with more bottom end.

"Brew C was the same timing, but with a 25 per cent by-pass - that is, you don't brew with all the water, but you add more hot water to what you have already brewed. This is like an Americano, adding hot water to an espresso, or an Aeropress, where you

# The ancient art of boiling water

*More and more makers of water-dispensing equipment are looking to highlight the difference in taste that can come from just just a degree up or down*

Right: David Locker



can brew a concentrated amount and then dilute with more hot water. This throttled back a bit from Brew B - it achieved a more rounded result."

Meanwhile, at the Coffee Machine Company stand, Marco Olmi was doing very much the same with espresso through the newest Rancilio machine.

"We have been demonstrating what happens if you start brewing a shot at 92c, and then in the middle of the shot, lift it to 96c... or, start at 92c and drop to around 88c. The point is not to say which is 'best', but to illustrate the different characteristics which can come out at different temperatures. At a tenth of a degree, you don't see much differ-

ence - but there is a point at which it becomes very clear."

The Rancilio technology in this temperature control is different from other espresso machines, said the company - it is done by combining waters at different temperatures from different parts of the machine.

"There's a little boiler on top of the group, which is where the temperature is adjusted. It goes up by the use of a small element, and goes down by an injection of colder water, with a little probe measuring to fractions of a degree. This is a new way of doing it.

"The point is that you can keep adjusting it, in a temperature 'curve'. It sounded geeky to me at first, but I'm a convert!"

Elsewhere, several companies have recently been stressing the need for precise temperature control in catering.

"The requirement to heat at different temperatures in different ways has been coming for a number of years," says Drewry Pearson, managing director at Marco Beverage Systems. "It has all come from the move to unique single-origin filter coffees, and this is a genuinely fantastic interest.

"What everyone is wanting is a water delivery which they can match to the coffee, and the demand has driven us to more accuracy in the method, because operators want a commercial repeatable, deliverable result, without complication."

Marco recently created the Uber boiler, a machine which heated water to a remarkably fine degree of accuracy. However, says Drewry Pearson, even well-judged use of 'conventional' water boilers can be seen to return a result.

"There is no point in giving people a machine which is beyond what they want - although people's requirements have generally gone beyond their old needs. About ten per cent of the market has seen the difference, and the rest are buying the commodity of

water-heating.

"We have one customer who has calculated the thousands of pounds a year he has saved in energy usage simply through buying the right equipment. You can save a fortune."

Precise temperature control has rejuvenated the business in filter coffee, says Drewry Pearson.

"The concept of one-cup brewing has now become so much fun - there are people who will never put milk in coffee again after having tasted a great 'straight' brewed drink. I'm now completely convinced that coffee is going in this direction, and the huge advantage is that there is no wastage - there is no vat-full of coffee sitting around, and the barista can show his skill in brewing properly.

"The Uber is more of a project than a machine - it is a continuous ongoing development, it's not made as a production-line item, it was never intended to be, and we have never advertised it.

"Even so, we sell as many as we want to make, we've sold loads in the States, Australia and the Far East, and if any café owner says this is the right thing for them, they can have it.

"This whole brewing movement is a very exciting place to be!"

Meanwhile, Fetco too has come up with a new machine which offers four pre-set temperature settings, with the intention of pouring the right water instantly for, say, a green tea and then a black one.

"With the rise in popularity of tea in its various forms, and the general realisation of the effect that temperature can have on coffee, the need for a one

single product that can cater for multiple water temperatures has never been more important," says the brand's Roger Cobb.

"Like other makers, Fetco has always been able to control at least a single temperature for its coffee brewers, but now we have a dispenser with a programmable range between 70c and 96c.

"This is at the forefront of technology for the production of accurate and instant hot water temperatures."

At Lincat, the view is that in practice, not very many pre-sets are required.

"Customers are becoming more discerning - a pot of stewed tea is simply not acceptable any more," says marketing director Nick McDonald.

"When developing the FilterFlow range we consulted a number of leading tea experts, and it became clear that water quality and temperature are key to brewing the perfect cup of tea. So it is now possible to set the boiler to a precise temperature to suit the type of tea being brewed.

"In most cases, an operator will require no more than two different temperatures."

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**Britain's population of independent coffee roasters is steadily growing, and they are getting smaller – we constantly now hear of yet another new roasting company popping up, with just one or two people doing the work, often in tiny rented units on factory parks.**

But for all the attention given to these new roasters, who are always handed the description of 'artisan', the longer-established craft roasters are still with us, and still developing. One of the most notable is Union Hand-Roasted of east London, which was founded after Jeremy Torz and Steven Macatonia discovered micro-roaster cafes in San Francisco, and which has now reached its tenth year.

(The two started in a small way in 1995 as Torz and Macatonia Gourmet Coffee Roasters. They merged with the then Seattle Coffee Co and in 1998 were bought by Starbucks to enter the UK market. Steven and Jeremy left in 2000 and returned to independent roasting in 2001 as Union.)

Union, it might reasonably be said, is the company which most effectively bridges the definitions of 'independent' and 'mainstream' – it works along craft principles, and yet has appeared in supermarkets. About this, one online review website has said: "despite growing fairly large and seeming rather more 'commercial' than some of its competitors, their coffee is still really good!"

Another roaster once said of this apparent contradiction that he imagines Union's roastery to be like the last scenes in the Wizard of Oz – out front, artisan roasting is going strong, but behind a curtain there is a massive industrial operation supplying the supermarkets!

Is it correct to regard Union as a true craft roaster which just happens to have got rather big? If so, how on earth do they manage to reconcile the two, and craft-roast in supermarket quantities, in a non-computerised way, without wearing roaster Steven Macatonia to a frazzle?

"This is a question, or perception, that I find both amusing and frustrating at the same time!" laughs Jeremy Torz. "We are really not as big as people think – we try to create a positive and open image and to look professional and 'well dressed'!"

"Our goal when we started, and one that continues to guide us to this day, was to always blind-cup the coffees and select to a high standard – Steven and I have been judges every year in Cup of Excellence competitions since 2003, and we routinely use the same scoring system for our selections.

"To bring these quality coffees to an often under-educated consumer (and I don't see why the 'average' person shouldn't be able to drink great coffee!) we decided early on to invest in a look and feel of packaging and presentation that could be visible on shelf in independent and possibly multiple retailer outlets.

"If this has caused us to look a bit more commercial, or slick, as some have said, then that's a pity, but we wanted to make our coffees both accessible as well as aspirational for those looking to move up to a better cup."

Nor is there a contradiction between being in big high-street names and being a relatively small roaster, says Jeremy Torz.

"The fact that we do appear in some supermarkets doesn't mean that we are shifting pallet-loads every day! The market for premium/craft coffees is still a relatively small one, and even if we were to grow a bit more, I know that we will still be able to source and provide stunningly good coffees... we'll just work longer hours!"

The description of 'craft' or 'artisan' roaster does not imply 'small', says Torz. Rather, it is an attitude, a state of mind and intent.

"We started Union Hand-Roasted to provide coffees that are genuinely amongst the best you'll find in the UK market. We set out to do this by developing our knowledge, not only of roasting but also of the myriad issues that affect coffee quality and flavour at origin.

"The view that a 'craft roaster' can only work with 2-3 sacks of a particular coffee and roast in a machine no bigger than a five-kilo batch is, I feel, a limiting one which ignores all of the skills a roaster must learn to develop on his or her craft.

"I've come across plenty of individuals over the years who have bought a roasting machine and who are turning out disappointing coffee – I'd rather take the view that 'craft roasting' is an approach to one's coffees that encompasses a detailed approach to sourcing, proficiency in cupping, knowledge about different processing methods of green coffee, and an understanding of the roasting chemistry.

"I honestly believe that as a result of our work at origin and our size, being able to commit to farmers improving their practices and rewarding them financially, has resulted in our coffees being better and more consistent today than at any time in our past.

"It is how these are applied to the business, I believe, that defines the roaster."

Nevertheless, he cautions, there are aspects in which the size of the facility is noticeable.

"Roast batch size is indeed important because, over a certain size, the ratio of convection to radiated heat changes radically, and this does affect the cup. In our experience, at the small-batch end of manufacturers' ranges of machine size, the physical construction of the coffee roasting machine is probably more a factor. Modern

*"We are not as big as people think – we create a positive image and look 'well-dressed'!"*

**Union Hand-Roasted is one of the distinctive independent roasteries – its brand has reached out into supermarkets, but founder Jeremy Torz argues that his principles remain firmly 'artisan'.**

machines often compromise on heavy-build quality as the machines are developed at lower cost to attract the new small-batch roaster.

"The results are apparent to an experienced eye and palate."

### BARISTAS

Some roasters make it their business to hang out with 'the barista scene' (and some, quite notably, do not!) Last year, Union hosted barista jams to help competitors prepare for the barista championships – what does a roaster gain by being in close company with those who actually pull the shots?

"For us, it's an opportunity for a two-way exchange of knowledge and ideas.

"As we travel to origin regularly, and buy from farmers who we get to know well, and who we support over multiple harvest years, we can select coffees and request processing methods

(e.g. pulped naturals and honey processes or changes to washing or drying protocols) that can really enhance and draw out certain characteristics in a coffee and enable us to develop new blends or micro-lots that may be of interest to creative and experienced baristas.

"A micro-lot might be coffee from a single picking/processing day at a farm, often just 10-20 sacks.

"Talking with the baristas about what they find interesting is always a fascinating process, as although we can be completely objective around a coffee's quality in the cup, the subjective response of different baristas and consumers is always enlightening for us.

"Our joint project with Taylor St Baristas was such a case, where we worked with their baristas to develop our Rogue Espresso blend, and which we continue to refine and make changes to, on an almost monthly basis as new seasons change and new coffees arrive.

"On the flip side, I feel it's a real opportunity to help baristas learn about origins and coffees that are produced to a high standard and which are grown sustainably. (And sustainability is not just a 'green' issue, but radically affects quality over a number of years).

"If baristas want to become roasters then they have to appreciate that every part of the coffee supply chain has its own nuances, and how these affect the cup must form some part of a roaster's understanding if they are to represent our industry to the public in a knowledgeable and informative way, or at very least for them to be able to make an educated choice about the green coffees offered to them.

"I think the key issue here is the fact that we never want to stop learning about coffee and people's responses to it. I could not imagine working in a bubble without the rich interaction we have with both growers and the end users. As a roaster I want all the input possible in order for our coffees to be the best and to be perceived as such."

### BLENDS

It has recently been said that too many coffee shops now want to have their own 'unique' espresso blend, and that the demands for these have become impractical – there are now just too many requests for something that nobody else in the galaxy has got!

Union's website invites boutique delis and coffee bars to discuss such needs – are they really able to handle a request for a 'unique' blend, or is the answer likely to be: 'we already have the right coffee for your coffee-house, and here it is...'

"Two questions I often ask in response to such a request are – do you have a feel for the flavour profile and character you are looking for and can you describe it? And what would this give you, in your customer's mind?"

"If they can answer both questions then yes, we will explore options. Again, however, they must have the barista skills to match – many cafes create greater variations in their coffee through inconsistent serving of their house blend than would be realised through having changing blends or custom coffee!

"From the roaster's point of view it can be done, but it's a real challenge and if anyone says different..."

Custom blends are tricky for many reasons, says Jeremy Torz.

"When Steven and I first started roasting back in '95, we said that we'd do any blend for anybody, in any bag. A year later we had created a monster, with two lever-arch files full of blend



# the Union



Steven Macatonia (left) and Jeremy Torz

recipes and packaging styles!

"When a café uses an average of 10-15 kilos per week, even with a small roaster you are not going to be roasting those coffees more than once or twice a week, and it's difficult for the roaster to develop a real familiarity for the coffee. Even with the most skilled roaster doing craft roasting by hand, and not electronic profiling, they will find it a challenge to offer the consistency.

"Even fine coffees do change through the year and a blend needs to be constantly balanced and even re-blended to take account of this. Lack of familiarity also means that when the roaster cups the coffee to check roast



**"I don't see why the 'average' person shouldn't be able to drink great coffee"**  
- Jeremy Torz

and consistency to recipe/style before sending it out, if they are not as familiar with its nuances, it's very difficult to give the customer a guarantee that it will not slip over time.

"In addition, many cafés find it difficult to always manage their stocks, and we often get calls from customers saying that they had a busy weekend, so can we get some coffee out to them that day? Well, if it's a custom blend, it's not going to be sitting there ready for them!"

Even if renewal supplies were roasted instantly on demand, there would

be another problem.

"Too fresh a coffee at the point of use means that it can be unstable in the portafilter, and the user will experience far greater variation in the flavour of that coffee in the cup, and the grinders will have to be adjusted to compensate as it rests over the following days.

"At Union, our core three blends are roasted every day, and we allow just enough on hand to mostly give a three-day resting time before the coffee is delivered. This allows us to provide a responsive service whilst preventing over extraction due to this weekly freshness variation."

## BRANDS

A familiar question is of whether the roaster's name or the café's should take precedence. The number of branded boards outside cafes has grown considerably in recent years.

Union does offer its own point-of-sale material and A-boards, including a very unusual 3D one. What, for Union, is the ideal balance of working together with a coffee-house operator and aligning the Union brand with the café's identity?

"We have always tried to make our point-of-sale materials educational and thought-provoking, as well as carrying our logo. Union is about a depth of knowledge and responsibility as well as great coffee, and we never seek to take over an outlet, but we do really want to complement the service and surroundings and underscore to the public, through our own reputation, that this location would be a good place to go for a great cup of coffee.

"The role of a brand is to convey a sense of expectation to a consumer to help them make up their mind about a

purchase. People buy products from brands that they trust – we want Union Hand-Roasted to be a byword for great quality coffee, sourced in a responsible and ethical manner, and served by people who share our interest and dedication. If we can get that over to trade customers then I think we are really helping our client to build their business as well.

"On the few occasions that I have had calls from people wanting to really slather our name all over their premises, it has turned out that they expect to be able to open the doors, not to have to worry about standards and let a bit of slick signage do all the work for them - we've never taken these opportunities up!"

## BREWED

The increasing trend towards filter and 'brewed' coffees puts an interesting responsibility on the roaster. If good filter coffee is growing in acceptance in coffee-houses, then what's the best way for them to go about working with their roaster to create a good, reliable, interesting filter coffee offer?

"It has to come from taste! That's why we always blind taste samples presented to us so we can evaluate without preconceptions.

"If you choose to offer a coffee with a great name or romantic story, that can help pique interest and give the customer a reason to try something new, but if the cup doesn't match the promise it will be a hollow experience and people will see through it.

"When we participate in consumer food shows or events, people read our single-origin coffee menu board, and we know certain words will always get people to try a coffee, so I'd say an honest assessment of flavour profile has to be the leader.

"Taste all that your roaster can put in front of you. Brew the coffees all in the same manner so you can taste the differences that arise from the bean, and not the brew. Choose coffees that offer a range of acidity profiles, levels of body and mouthfeel so you can cover preferences as you would in a wine shop – think light whites through to full bodied reds.

"Filter coffees, if handled well, can add layers of delight to a coffee shop experience and it's not as risky as changing the core espresso coffee. The most important thing, I feel, is to offer diversity – coffees that people will recognise as different to each other. Many consumers are still unaware of this."

And, he acknowledges, so are many coffee-house staff. So, for the proprietor, the tactic is – use your roaster.

"If you don't know what separates great coffee from the average, how will you pass on confidence to your customer? Let your staff learn to taste and learn to recognise – at Union we have a cupping room where trade customers can come in and taste a range of coffee and we love to help get cafe people in there."

## Independent roasters - the future of the trade?

**For the green-bean importers, the rise of the independent roaster community has had an interesting effect - the new breed of small roasters have turned out to be far more enquiring and demanding than the more established big brands.**

And this, says Simon Wakefield of DR Wakefield, makes providing beans to the newer roasters a fascinating and challenging experience.

"Independent roasters, as part of our customer base, are small in volume - but in importance, they are big, because these people are the future of our industry.

"They don't have the same prehistoric barriers over what coffees are right or wrong. We had a tasting session recently on a fruity El Salvador... the old coffee industry would have said 'we don't like that', but the new roasters said: 'yeah, clean and funky!'"

It goes wider, says Simon Wakefield. Not only are the new roasters communicating their excitement to the coffee-houses, but the message is getting back to the farms.

"The independent roasters are now very particular about what they're buying, and what is very new is that the farmers are now aware of this. Just a few years ago, the farmers weren't aware of the high-street coffee market or roasters at all, but suddenly we have all the online excitement about competitions and speciality coffee auctions, and suddenly all kinds of companies in different countries know how to get their names on the internet.

"To a degree, this makes things very difficult for us, because the kind of call we get from independent roasters is 'we've heard of these eight farms, and we want information on them... and we want it right now!'"

"But on the other hand, it certainly becomes much more interesting to be able to talk about values other than price."

Price has been an issue in recent months, but Simon Wakefield sees no reason to panic.

"A Radio 4 interviewer asked me: what would you say if coffee goes to \$3.10, or \$3.60? I said I expect the consumer would not stop drinking coffee - it's part of our lifestyle, and it's still a cheap luxury.

"The price increases have had an effect on roasters' margins, but is it affecting café margins? Yes, but not as much, because it is easier to compensate at café level, with another few pence per cup. In London, where people don't worry about an extra 5p, an increase is not having an effect, and I think that all along the line, we can cope with this situation."

Our feature on Britain's roasters continues over...

# Great coffees are not just for the elite coffee-bars!

Perhaps five years ago, Steve Hurst of the speciality green-bean importer Mercanta happened to mention to us that he and his team had totted up the number of independent coffee roasters they knew in the UK, and were astonished when they reached three figures.

"And most of them are still there!" he told us last month. "Over the country, we first had a south-coast proliferation of them, then the west and Scotland... it is major urban centres, then university cities.

"What we've been expecting for years has continued to happen - everywhere, you can now get more alternatives, more venues, different styles.

"To all the roasters, our message remains constant - we have always preached that for a small premium, you can vastly increase your quality. For some years, this fell on deaf ears, but now it has come to pass.

"A few years ago, when visitors to London asked us where to go for good coffee, we were accused of just sending them to our favourite customers - now we have a whole trail of good coffee to take them on.

"The independent roasters have raised the bar to a degree which we can now actually see - I have actually seen people queuing to get into a café which is buying into the new option, while the chain café



*You now have to be either very big, or very good, and the most dangerous place to be is in the middle."*  
- Steve Hurst

across the road stays empty.

"You know, as the big supermarkets get bigger, so do the speciality grocers... so do not forget the pendulum effect of those who succeed by doing the opposite!

"You certainly now have to be either very big, or very good, and the most dangerous place to be is in the middle."

How important is the service of the independent roaster to the provincial high-street coffee house?

"I have always thought it a great irony that for a café, having a great crafted coffee offering is thought

of as being in the big league, or the elite. Of course it isn't!"

The clue here, says Hurst, is that great coffees are easier to obtain than might be thought. The characteristics of great coffee are not necessarily obscure or rare.

"There is a problem of some people going for certain regions because 'they sound interesting', not because they are great coffees. "There is also too much 'taste language' spoken, too much stale coffee... and far too much if what is spoken is a figment of someone's imagination!

"Someone said to us: 'what identifiable characteristics would be recognised by the man in the street?' I said, don't bother sub-dividing into thousands of coffees - I can put eight or ten coffees on the table, and the layman will tell the difference.

"We now know that with just a little bit of care, any café owner can now present the coffee parallel to the tea menu - you can bring it down to a menu of four, say Sumatra, Brazil, Guatemala and Kenya, of which each one will be clearly identifiable to the average coffee-drinker.

"For the average high-street coffee house, it's perfectly do-able!"

We have all become aware of a rise in the independent roaster population, and a lot of this activity may have been inspired by one person - the example of one James Hoffmann, barista champion turned roaster.

It was Hoffmann who, encouraged by his then employer La Spaziale, became the first Briton to win the world barista championship. He then made a move which surprised almost everyone, forming his own Square Mile roasting company. Two or three years on, the brand is one of the top 'cool' coffee brands in the top coffee spots of London. His example must have inspired many of the new roasteries.

"Several of the arrivals have come from places where there are a lot of roasters, Australia and New Zealand," returns Hoffmann equably, diverting the compliment, but acknowledges that whoever has been behind it, the emergence of more independent roasters is

## Make it good and fresh - and talk about it!

a good thing: "we had got to the stage in the UK where we were coffee brokers - it was an import mentality."

What can the independent roaster bring to the café trade?

"The feature I'm most interested in is 'diversity'. If your business is in 'good coffee', then the biggest hurdle you have is getting across the idea that coffee can be more than a brown liquid. To be a lone company in this is difficult!

"In today's London coffee culture, the operators and roasters are all friends, they can all talk coherently, and as a result the message is now getting across. Therefore, the more roasters who talk about freshness, the better - we'll all sell more.

"This notion alone has the capacity to increase British consumption vastly! If the public were better informed, and if we made it easier for them to find better coffee, then they would at least buy double."

And, says Hoffmann, the public does want good coffee; we should not get caught up in an 'us and them' position.

"To those who are coffee enthusiasts, it is 'all about the coffee', but I refuse to believe that the customer base is only those who want 'great' coffee. The industry treats the general public like they don't want good coffee... and they do!

"Accessibility to it is the problem.



*"The industry treats the public as if they don't want good coffee... and they do!"*

- James Hoffmann

When you don't know where to get it, you can't buy it, and so the great challenge for the independent coffee house is to get the public to cross the threshold. It hasn't helped that in the recent past, the method of promoting coffee-houses was 'make it look like a business they know - make it look like McDonalds'!

If the consumer wants good coffee - what does the everyday coffee trade want from their roaster?

"Coffee suppliers have a strange relationship with their trade - meat suppliers don't

tell the chef how to cook, but coffee suppliers have always wanted to control their trade customers. They have forced the branding, from cups to A-boards, almost as if they are saying - 'the customer only comes to your café because of our brand'.

"But the customer should be going to the café because of the service, and the experience. The suppliers should be putting themselves in a position to assist the café, not to control them!

"I came from working for a company which always tried to be a supply 'partner', and working for La Spaziale provided the mentality which I brought into my own business.

"And I hope I have learned more from serving the customer direct, which I did before that and again with Penny University (Hoffmann's experimental brew café, which had very few seats, and in which the customer was encour-

aged to interact with the barista who was brewing the drink). Thinking like the customer, the one in front of you right now, is a great part of customer service."

The same, it follows, should go for the roaster's relationship with an independent café.

"I encourage the independent café to ask: 'who's roasting near me?' and go out and find them. We have got too close to a monoculture in this country, and local relationships are a very good thing."

Square Mile does not use a 'range' of blends in the usual sense - it has been a pioneer of the 'seasonal' strategy.

"Yes, we were unusual in this approach, although it is becoming less so. We decided to have 'seasonal' blends, in that our blend would change every three months to incorporate all the interesting new coffees we found. We took an approach which was unusual in the industry.

"Now, for a roaster, this is a terrifying thing to do, in an industry which has been dominated by the concept of 'consistency', meaning that brand taste must stay the same, come what may. And there was another problem in that we did not communicate the concept of 'seasonality' well, so some people thought that our spring blend would 'taste like spring', which was not the point.

What happened? It worked, laughs Hoffmann.

"Our customers now got annoyed when we didn't change to this year's spring blend quick enough - they wanted the new blend!"

"This has told us that the most important things are seasonality, freshness... and communicating why you're doing it."

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About ten years ago, Steve Leighton had a coffee shop in Stafford. It wasn't a great success, possibly because his ideas were a little ahead of his time in that area... so he turned to roasting, and his Has Bean is now one of the very best-known independents. Barista champions seek out his blends, and his online *Tamper Tantrum* video discussions have been a pioneer in barista debate.

Leighton is not so much concerned that coffee houses seek out their 'local' roaster as that they find the 'right' one.

"I don't know if the 'local' roaster is more important than the 'right' roaster. You need to find the personality and the company that will work for you more than who is close. The company that can give you the right coffee for your brand is much more important than where it comes from... and you cannot worry about food miles on a product that's grown in the tropics!"

Champions use Has Bean custom blends – is it reasonable for a high-street coffee house to have their 'own' blends?

"For most roasters, making a tailor-made blend is near to impossible, and right next to crazy. But we can make great blends to fit the right person - it takes work, but it's very possible.

"However, at Has Bean we don't believe one house blend fits all, and we have spent the past twelve months making four blends to fit what we think are the major differences, the sectors that need filling for the masses.

"And I have over a hundred other blends in my little black book. This is stuff I have worked on for personal pleasure more than anything else, and stuff I'd love to give out to the world.

"But I think it's less important creating a unique blend than finding the one to fit the coffee shop and its customer base."

Leighton is known for his championship-winning espresso blends, but is also enthusiastically roasting for filter use, what the Americans call 'brewed'



Steve Leighton in his familiar Sunderland FC shirt (photographer and picture source unknown)

## We live in a brewed-coffee golden age... but choose it well

coffee. This, he warns the coffee trade, is not easy. Choose your filter coffee well.

"Brew bars are cool, and it's about time! I think I've been loving brewed coffee since the year 2000, when I introduced it to my own now closed-down shop. Nobody was interested, and the reason was that exceptional tasty coffees were not available then.

"Today, there are stunning coffees – we live in a brewed coffee golden age.

"The problem is, not everyone roasts them correctly. This is the banana skin for the brew bar, that could kill it off like it did for me in 2000. Brewed coffee is far harder to get right than espresso - and as so many people get espresso wrong, it's not a surprise that brewed coffee quality is varied, at best.

"A roaster that tries to make brewed coffee right now has never had it easier - but many still fail."

## Use the roaster's knowledge, says Grey

One of the hazards of the modern coffee bar trade is that any successful industry attracts some doubtful would-be suppliers.

And one of the tasks of the friendly independent roaster, says Roy Grey of Capital Coffee in Wimbledon, is to steer a café owner away from disaster. In particular, away from some of the cheap coffee deals which are on offer.

"What's the problem of that for café owners? Well, some of those deals are simply not possible... it makes you wonder what is really in some of those bags!"

The advantage of the experienced independent roaster, says Roy Grey, is that the café owner can generally expect to be told straight truths, even if it does the roaster out of a sale.

"A really interesting thing is that so many people in the café business will

not even consider looking at an alternative coffee. They've got the one they use, and they stick with it.

"Now, when an independent roaster suggests that you might try some new coffees, they're not always just selling the same way as a big brand is.

"The good advice is this - if you try other coffees every so often, you'll know what's available on the market. That doesn't mean that you'll always change to a new one – even if you reassure yourself that the one you're already using really is the best one for your use, then that's a good job done."

And that, says Grey, is the kind of helpful truth you get from an independent roaster.

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A remarkable tasting session was held at a small deli-café in west London last month. The leader was one of the UK's foremost authorities on tea, but the audience were all experienced coffee-house baristas.

The session was the idea of Kasim Ali, whose Waterloo Gardens Teahouse in Cardiff became an award-winner almost immediately after opening up. He also wholesales quality teas - but why invite coffee-shop people?

"I wanted to approach coffee people as I know they have good palates. They also have an attention to detail when it comes to brewing that they can use to do justice to fine teas. I have grown to love and respect the coffee community, who have a togetherness and a knowledge-sharing attitude that most other industries can only dream of... so my aim was to let them know that they already have all the tools and skills in place in the coffee shop to deal in fine tea.

"I have my shop, I have the best tea blender in the world, and a lot of people I meet in the coffee world tell me they know nothing about tea - but they can do it. They have scales, they have hot water, and they have baristas who care!"

The session was led by Jane Pettigrew, probably the UK's leading writer on tea.

"The world makes a great mistake in using the word 'tea' for everything we brew," she told the baristas.

"A lot of people are scared of the detail, which is why they just stay with

# Taking baristas to tea

builders' tea. The great thing about tea, and this is also the big hurdle to get over with consumers, is that tea is something to 'relax into'. But a lot of tea-rooms are now running their own tastings, and customers are enjoying themselves, and learning while they do so."

It was noticeable that as Jane and Kas worked their way through a menu of eighteen teas, the coffee sector became fascinated in learning.

The difference in white, green and black tea, she explained, is in 'oxidation', the degree to which leaves are exposed to the air after they are plucked. White tea is the 'least-handled' tea, with only slight oxidation happening through handling - similar to the effect of bruising a pear. It is the most delicate tea, but badly-treated, can be disappointing.

"In a paper tea bag, white tea can be horrible - oversteeping it can bring about a bad taste. The correct colour should be like champagne."

This fascinated the coffee men, with their tasting samples of silver needle and pai mu tan showing very little colour at all.

Green tea, continued Jane Pettigrew, is heated to stop the oxidation.

"In China, they use dry heat - think of a wok, in which the tea trembles against the hot metal, which 'fixes' it.



*Kasim Ali - note the remarkable clarity and lightness of the tea he is holding. This is not everyday tea!*

*An award-winning tea room invites a group of coffee-house baristas to get inside the subtleties of tea*

Then they roll it, usually by hand, which is very dependant on skill and also the weather, and this is where you might bring out a taste which is chestnutty or pea-poddy.

"The Japanese steam-heat the leaf, which brings out a different aspect. Now you begin to see either lime-green colours, or darker ones. Matcha, which is stone-ground to something like talcum powder, is very intense - it should be sweet, not astringent, and you are supposed to whisk it with a bamboo thing like a shaving stick until it bubbles like a soup. This is what is served in a four-hour Japanese tea ceremony. And the health message is extraordinarily powerful."

Again, she observed, many people are put off green teas because too many caterers over-extract it, and get a medicinal taste. Kasim Ali, who was brewing for the baristas, prepared one Japanese sencha at only 90 seconds, at 70c.

Oolongs, she told the baristas, are the most difficult teas to pin down in terms of taste. "These are 'semi-oxidised', on a kind of sliding scale - the more oxidation, the darker the leaf, and so 'oolong' can cover many different stages. The tea is picked, then laid out in the sun to wither, which brings out a certain sweetness. Then the leaves are tossed lightly in a bamboo tray, and very lightly bruised. The farmer knows by skill when the oxidation is enough, and the manual rolling into pellets is very labour-intensive."

To compare all this with some more familiar tastes, she served the baristas some black teas - a low-growing Darjeeling, the 'champagne of teas', and then Assam and Ceylon.

"The Assam is a sea-level tea, very fast-growing, with a very-strong cup. You don't want the early spring tea, because the second flush is the best. An orthodox Assam is much more sophisticated than a tea-bag Assam - it is rolled with a certain respect, is much lighter than a tea-bag Assam, and the taste makes you think of malt.

"Ceylon teas are divided by altitude. The high-grown is subtle and punchy, the low-grown is punchy and gutsy, fragrant and rich."

Having digested all this, the coffee men were invited to consider some extremely unusual teas.

"China jasmine greens are rolled into little balls by hand, and wrapped in paper immediately," Jane Pettigrew told them. "They are then stored until the jasmine blooms. They are layered overnight with jasmine flowers for seven or eight nights, with fresh jasmine flowers every night. The result can be an after-dinner tea to wipe you away!"

(But again, she cautioned, bad ones will just put your customers off - in particular, jasmine teas made with artificial flavourings can often be recognised before tasting, by a film on the water).

And then the baristas were invited to taste some very unusual teas - Kasim Ali had brought along his American supplier, Rishi Teas of Milwaukee, to explain how in the ancient tea 'forests' of Yunnan province, strange things are being done by an ethnic minority workforce working with American agronomists - rather like the California Nappa Valley wine, where they have taken French and Italian grape varieties, and done something different with them.



*A thoughtful Jonathan Sharp*

"The surprising thing is that the Chinese are making tea their own way from an Assamica, a tea we thought only grew in India!" said Jane Pettigrew. "They are making a green tea from a bush which you would not expect to be used for a green.

"Another Yunnan, the golden needle, is from a hot, foresty, musty damp area. This is unlike any other black tea - a leathery taste, a black that smells like a green. The Yunnan China Breakfast black tea is grown higher than Assam, and this is much sweeter than an English breakfast."

And then the baristas discovered the famous pu-erh, the most expensive tea in the world. This is the one formed into round cakes, like big English cheeses.

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"Pu-erh is everything you are not supposed to do with tea. Hundreds of years ago, the Chinese traded tea with Tibet, and if you transport tea on a mule, you're going to drop it. So they compressed the tea into 'cakes'.

"It starts as a green tea, but ages for up to fifty years, which changes the colour. This is rather more than oxidation, because it's more a bacterial fertilisation. Yes, it smells like the monkey house at the zoo, or like compost. Fortunately, it tastes a lot better than it smells.

"You pick the tea, pan dry it, roll it, and pour it into a cotton bag rather like a sock. You push it down so hard that the top of the bag becomes a kind of knot in the middle of a circular cake. Then you put the bag on a plank, put a twenty-kilo weight on top of it... and then you stand on it!"

Is it really pricey?

"It sells for thousands of dollars, so there is now skulduggery in the market," said Jane. "I've seen cakes of pu-erh prices at \$30,000, and of course you can't test how good it is until you open the cake - and then it's ruined.

What did the coffee-house men make of all this? This all ties in with the brew-bar concept in coffee, said one - and it



Britain's top lady of tea - Jane Pettigrew

fits the way that coffee customers like to be involved with the brewing of their drink.

"It has certainly changed my views on white and green teas," said Stuart Lee Archer of Pumphreys in Newcastle. "It has opened my eyes to the possibility of adding much greater value to the way cafes serve tea."

From Kilimanjaro in Edinburgh, Jonathan Sharp was equally interest-

ed. "I thought the event was excellent. We spend a huge amount of time researching and training on espresso, as do a lot of independent coffee shops. But like most stores, 15-30 per cent of our hot drink sales are not coffee at all - they're tea. Something I want to achieve this year is really improve our tea offering and knowledge, bringing it in line with the quality of coffee we're serving."

The response from the coffee sector was so good, says Kasim Ali, he will now run another session in London, followed by one in Cardiff.

The imaginative session was followed by one puzzling but unanswered question - when is someone from the coffee sector going to think of running a similar event for tea-houses?

# Tea secrets of a Soho boozier

The pub which was once notorious for the rudest landlord in the world, and which is still famous for the irreverent Private Eye lunches, is now also home to a quirky tea-room

One of the most fascinating tea-rooms in this country is in one of the most unlikely locations, which has the most unlikely reputation - it is a venue infamous for historic rudeness to customers.

The Coach and Horses, in the heart of London's Soho, is not a smart pub - it's a boozier. It doesn't have swish carpets or soft furnishing, it has rough wood finishes, and up a rickety, twisty staircase is an unremarkable dual-aspect room (windows to two sides of a street corner) with a series of scrubbed-wood tables, a thirty-year old gramophone with collection of vinyl records, and elderly three-tier cake stands, sitting on what turn out to be antique lace tablecloths.

This room is famous in its own right, and the reason can be seen on the walls, which hold several framed Private Eye covers. This is the room which has held the infamous Private Eye lunches for the past 47 years, historically the event at which the satirical magazine received much inside information from its star political guests, and for many years the bar beneath it was a pub long noted both for its clientele of hard-drinking famous writers, and for the rudest landlord in the pub trade.

"Ah, Norman is an amazing man, and he still drinks here," says the current owner, Alistair Choat, who is no stranger to controversy himself - he famously flouted the arrival of the smoking ban.

"As a bar manager, Norman could be very rude indeed - he'd tell customers to \*\*\*\* off, but in a unique way. You or I would never get away with it!

"There is a great story of a Private Eye lunch day when a very famous MP ran in a bit late, saying he was a guest for the lunch, and Norman, who was busy, told him to \*\*\*\* off. When he realised he had sent the star guest away, he went up to apologise to the magazine people. Typically, when he said what he'd done, they all cheered him!"

How on earth does an upstairs room in such a place become a well-frequented tea-room, with an admirable line in tea and food?

"The tea-room exists because the partners who own this pub love everything vintage, but without being too posh or stuffy about it. We collect antique linen and teapots, we put them in a very unpretentious setting, different from any other patisserie in London. We play music from an old record player, with all the vinyl crackles, and that's the charm."

The customer base is a varied one.

"Although people come for the bright lights, Soho is a village. There are 5,000 people who actually live here, loads of independent shops, and it is a preserved province - it is a 'people



Alistair Choat opens up a Feng Zhen tea - behind him are some of the framed Private Eye covers

know each other' place in the middle of London.

"The 'secret' part of our business is that you have to know where it is... you have to come into a hardcore boozier and ask for the tea-room! Even so, the customer base is broad - there are groups of elderly folk, some who come dressed in village style, and some who come dressed as if they're going to a wedding. We have hen parties, and we have a group of a dozen who book a slot every Saturday. We have groups of younger girls who are in town for the shopping, and who come here because they're too young to go to a pub.

"And there is a friendly interplay between the two kinds of customers - it's usually joshing, but I have seen one hen party come tripping down the stairs, dressed to the nines, and the entire bar went silent, open-mouthed!"

Delightfully, Alistair Choat is serious about his tea and his service.

"I wish I could charge Ritz prices for afternoon tea, but this is rather a different environment, and it suits me because I can set out to be very 1950s, quirky, and accessible, at £14.50. And the place gets full, particularly so on Saturdays.

"We only use loose leaf teas, from Reginald Ames. Our attitude is that a good cup of tea must be made properly, and we are proud that our cakes and scones are all made on the premises, although we do source some cakes from a small company, because we like supporting other small industry.

"Our sandwiches are cucumber, salmon, and egg in triangles, with the crusts cut off. They should be on thin, airy bread, and with not too much butter... and you never put cream cheese

on, because it kills the cucumber.

"We tend to opt for traditional cakes instead of fancies, so it's lemon sponge, Victoria sponge, chocolate, Dundee or fruit, and carrot cake. And noticeably, we now get a lot of requests for gluten-free cakes."

Any tea-room is measured by its scones... and this Soho boozier is proud of them.

"A scone is a Scottish unleavened bread, and I'm still waiting for the Scots to claim it as their own!" grins Alistair. "We make our own jam, which is light and runny, strawberry and blackberry, but this is very time-consuming. The cream is Devonshire clotted.

"What people do like is the unevenness of a genuine home-made scone. Quite recently, we had an outdoor party for the royal wedding, and because of the numbers, we were forced to order in some more scones.

"They weren't as good as ours. Soho was horrified."

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Can a coffee house and another business be complementary? There are many examples nowadays of combined businesses - we have pubs doubling as post offices, and coffee shops doubling as music stores and bookstores.

In London, a coffee shop attracting much interest is Look Mum, No Hands, in the city. It is a coffee bar of some class - and it repairs bikes!

Does one business promote the other? To what extent do both businesses have to be equally high in quality?

"Selling bikes would be a nightmare, because you have to have the latest and best of everything," observes the company's Lewin Chalkley. "We've got Cipollino's £6,000 racing bike in the window. So we concentrate on repairs, and the workshop does 25 per cent of our sales - which, considering they work in a little box room four metres square, is great!"

The partners come at the business from opposite directions. Sam, in the workshop, has 15 years' experience in bike shops, while Lewin started at Pret a Manger, was at Coffee and Crayons in Fulham (another dual-theme café - mums and kids) and was also general manager at Progreso.

The team are all cycle-racing enthusiasts, and as it is possible to race four nights a week in London, in various circuits and velodromes, there is a fine opportunity for the business to develop a special-interest community. Typically, with a big drop-down screen, they will show races in the café as well.

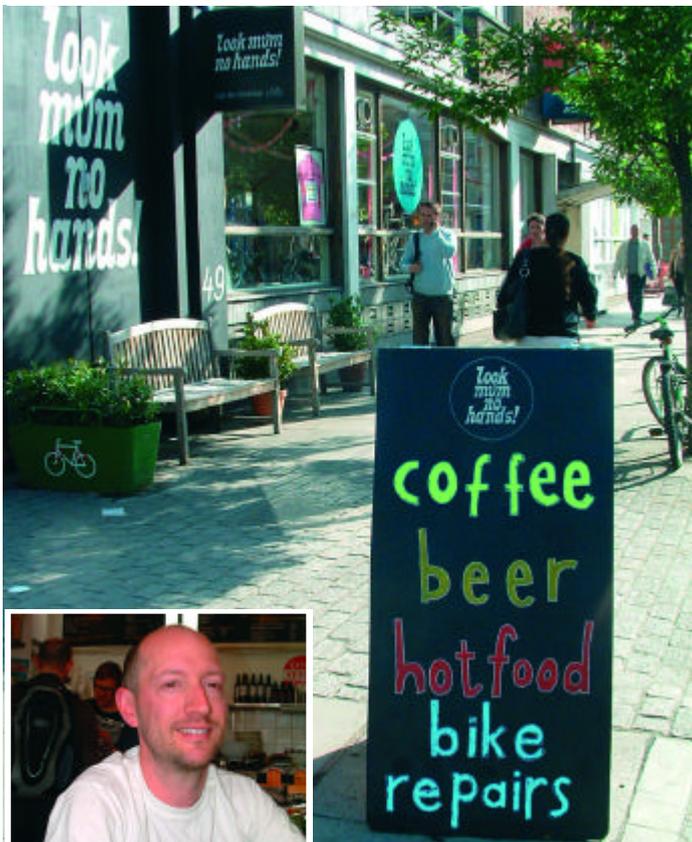
It is, however, a concept which baffles some trade suppliers.

"Giving people as many reasons as possible to come through your door has to be a good thing - but we have talked to a lot of branded companies who insist on wanting to know about our USP and our target customer... would-be suppliers really love to pigeonhole you!

"As it is, we get customers in lycra, and we get businessmen, and we get mums. We are a very female-friendly venue. Cycling is a subject which doesn't turn anybody off... if we were a



# Look Mum, two businesses!



Lewin Chalkley (left) - his colleagues, and many of his customers, are enthusiastic bike racers

football-themed place, we would.

"And our two activities are directly complementary - a flat tyre repair is ten minutes, which is just right for a coffee and a croissant. We wouldn't have our hands full, as we do, without both of them.

"And yes, you have to do both activities to the same standard. We couldn't have a great coffee and be a bad bike-repairer - I want the coffee to be top-notch, and Sam won't compromise on the quality of bike repairs."

This attitude led to some interesting

market research before the business began.

"I have used several suppliers in the past," recalls Lewin. "This time, I took my two business partners on a 'coffee tour' of London, and it became pretty obvious that many of the best places were using Square Mile coffee.

"So we went to see them, and we realised that they're a step above. One of the very first things they said was 'if you're going to have our beans, we'd like you to use a grind-on-demand grinder', and that was the attention to detail I liked. We can now get through about twelve of their 4-kilo buckets a week.

"We use their seasonal espresso, and we shout about every new blend when it arrives - we put it on the A-board outside, we copy their tasting notes to put on the tables, and yes, people do take them away.

"So, having a La Marzocco machine and Square Mile coffee, and a champion's racing bike in the window, rather shouts that we're serious about what we do!"

Twin business interests also tend to have a cross-market benefit.

The café sells Look Mum! branded bike tops and hats, and cycling books, and although Lewin Chalkley suggests that he is 'woefully bad' at marketing such things, the fact is that orders for them come in online, from across the world.

"Cycling is a worldwide pursuit, and people worldwide do like these things... and yes, the margin for add-on sales is worth having!"

## Cafe testers required for new kind of music service

A new kind of background music service is due to be launched in September this year, and the company behind it is now looking for volunteers to help with the beta-test phase. MusicStream involves a huge catalogue of professionally-produced tracks, spanning many genres and styles, organised into business-specific channels. The MusicStream player is downloaded onto a computer and connected to speakers.

The company sources, commissions or produces all of its music, so that it is royalty free, and that means there is no need for users to pay for PRS or PPL music licenses.

The creators wish to recruit a small number of suitable coffee house / café owners, ideally within the M25 area, to use the service and give feedback from mid June for around 6 weeks. The beta user group will then have the option of using the service ongoing free for 6 months.

Volunteers are invited to apply at <http://www.musicstreamplayer.com/beta> for more information

## Twin businesses grow around the UK

The latest motorbike café business we have come across is the Manor Bikers' café, at Bellerby, North Yorkshire, on what is described as 'one of the great bike touring roads of England'. This is another joint-business café, and promotes such offers as 'put your bike through a power-run session and see what it's capable of!' We were particularly interested to see that it shares another menu quirk with that great bikers' café we featured recently, the Ace on the north circular - there is actually a choice of instant coffee or fresh-ground espresso! The latest twin-business idea is the sewing café. The idea began in Paris, was publicised in Vogue, and now the Ministry Of Craft, a fabric training centre, has opened one in Manchester. Customers pay by the hour for coffee and use of craft equipment. In Cockermonth, the New Bookshop has turned itself into a joint coffee house and bookshop.



Here's a curious little thing we picked up at the Caffe Culture show - its the Kopiko, a kind of boiled sweet made from coffee and candy. It's a 'suck rather than chew', if you know what we mean. Two varieties, available from Carotino of Rickmansworth, in 120gm retail bags.

The latest arrival from the other side of the world has opened up in Clerkenwell, one of London's recently-renewed 'cool' areas for great coffee - and it has opened up with firm views about the coffee-house as a community centre, and the place of great customer service in the café trade.

St Ali is a Melbourne-based café group, named after the supposed 'patron saint of coffee', one Ali ibn Umar al-Shadhili, who reportedly brought the first coffee to Mocha in Yemen from Ethiopia, around 1400 AD.

In some of the general news media, the café's opening has been reported in the usual terms of another Aussie company coming in to rescue Londoners from bad coffee - however, this is an image from which the company's director of coffee, Tim Williams, quickly distances himself.

"One of the most annoying things in this business is the assumption that an Aussie accent signifies a good coffee. Yes, I came here from Australia, got straight off the plane to work with Flat White in Soho, and was at Climpsons after that. I did a lot of barista coaching, did eighteen months with Square Mile and Penny University, and a year with Intelligentsia coffee in Los Angeles. My coffee education took me through Scandinavia as well.

"LA at one time was a coffee desert, and so was London, but the idea is that everything Australian is coffee heaven is... well, it isn't my experience! It's time we should be talking more about the good, mature London coffee industry - we've had enough of 'the Melbourne boys are here to save the world!'"

The St Ali concept has a very distinct evangelical aim - good coffee, in a good community atmosphere.

"The goal for St Ali was quite explicit, in wanting to roast great coffee. However, the great problem with speciality coffee is that it has kept so 'exclusive' for so long - it's easy to get about 200 customers who are all coffee geeks saying how cool you are, but that isn't enough for a business!"

"So for us, the food side of things became just as important, and so did the level at which the customers choose to engage with each other. I believe coffee bars should be central to a community, and I think to see lots of small tables full of people at laptops is a terrible thing.

"So, we have a communal table of twelve seats in the front window and another at the back, and community interaction now happens... we now often see people buying coffee for others they didn't know before they came in here."

The St Ali site has a large roaster sitting at the back of the café, and while the company is already roasting its own espresso, steps are afoot to develop more filter coffees, and to develop a wholesale business serving other cafes.

# Customer service, in the presence of a saint !

The new St Ali coffee house in London has distinct aims - great coffee, but also the encouragement of community spirit among customers, and a belief that a good attitude to staff care is what develops the coffee business



Not so much a saintly attitude as a Chinese revolutionary one looking down on the roastery inside St Ali

"At present, we roast for our own use, and to sell in the pack. The wholesale business to come will not see us turn into another militant supplier - we are not interested in covering somebody else's business with our brand, or loading their business with A-boards and our branded umbrellas! But we will be looking to work with those whose aim for their coffee is 'something better than average'."

Today, St Ali has a simple policy in its bean sourcing - clean, sweet coffees for espresso, with a very new move into coffee for filter brewing. A move towards simple filter offering could be a great quality strategy for many high-street cafes, says Tim Williams. However, he suggests, it is management attitudes in some places that are holding things back.

"We think the 'brewed' coffee offer is

"I think to see lots of small tables with people at laptops is a terrible thing"

- Tim Williams



going to be important, although at the moment it's still a tough sell, because the market is still 95 per cent in favour of espresso drinks, with an established Italian legacy that says a £20,000 espresso machine is what adds quality in the cup!

"Sure, there's a huge skill in espresso, but it's a process in which having one of many variables just a bit out will result in an imbalance. It's so hard to pull a great espresso that many people in the café trade have given up on it... and yes, I will stand by that! There are too many operators relying on latte art and free wi-fi, because it hides the fact that the owners aren't putting in

enough training resources.

"But, even in many of the places that I won't go to for an espresso, I would very happily go there and pay my money if they only would put in a nice grinder and a good filter coffee. It's easy to get a great coffee from a simple filter set-up."

That reference to training resources is important, in the St Ali view.

The recent Penny University experiment in London, in which customers were treated like kings as non-espresso coffee was brewed especially for them, was the big guide towards what must happen with top-class coffee and top-class staff, says Tim Williams.

"Yes, Starbucks do put a blackboard up and say 'today's filter coffee is...' and that's good. But as an industry, we have under-invested in the excitement of filter coffee, and we have not invested in setting our baristas up for it.

"It is very unfortunate that being a barista in London is still seen as a job you have while you're at uni, although that is changing. The level we hold our staff at is a high one - we have our own certification programme that takes three months, and we have a set of exams which include every aspect of the barista's role. That results in a sig-

nificant pay increase, although of course we do recognise the requirement to pay them a decent wage to start with.

"The industry has under-invested. If they pay low, people will work to a low level. And if they work to a low level, the owner will see no point in trying to excite them to a high standard... a vicious circle.

"When I was at Penny University, the point was not the coffee - it was service. The attitude was 'you've come to my place, and my job is to give you something that will excite you'. Here, I have a regular Australian customer who comes in for an Americano, and I know it costs me nothing to offer him a free filter coffee, so he can taste the quality of what I really can offer him.

"Our next place will be like this - as the customer, you will interact direct with the barista, and the result will be service with 'a transfer of knowledge'."

This is the proposed Sensory Lab - it will not use the name of any sanctified coffee figure. How serious is the deference to the supposed saint?

Ali was not the first or only sanctified brewer - the generally-accepted patron saint of coffee-houses is St Drogo, who is also the patron saint of unattractive people, which has given some cafe owners a smile, and we cannot forget Marco D'aviano, 'friar cappuccino', who was beatified in 2003 for his services to bringing coffee to the civilised world. Does all this lend a certain reverence to the atmosphere in the cafe?

Tim Williams casts his eyes around the café and finds no shrine to a saint, but instead a massive portrait of a young Mao-Tse Tung making a one-finger gesture.

"Sorry," admits Tim with a grin, "I can't claim to actually feel a saintly presence...!"



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The spring of this year has been notable for coffee-related events - four in six weeks. The interest shown begs the question - have we now proved that the average consumer is interested in specialist beverages, and if so, what should the trade do to capitalise on this interest?

The most recent of these was the one with the highest numbers - the Bath Coffee Festival drew 10,115 consumers over a weekend, at no entry charge. The Allegra London Coffee Festival has published a consumer attendance figure of 7,500, and was a paid-entry event. The Tea and Coffee Festival at London's South Bank, another consumer event, has released no visitor figures.

Meanwhile the Caffè Culture trade show reported an attendance of 4,433 in two days, and also received the Exhibition News award for the best trade show of 2010, which was of course the one where the attendance shot up to 11,000 because of the arrival of fans for the world barista championship. One trade distributor remarked: "looks like Caffè Culture needs to go the way of the Fine Food Fair, where end-users and trade combine", but this was immediately turned down by the show organisers.

"We are a trade event, and will remain a trade event. Exhibitors say they prefer a trade-only show - they know visitors are coming on the stand for the right reasons."

"I'm not a fan of mixing trade and consumer shows," said Nick Kilby of

## The time is right to make the most of consumer shows

Teapigs, who exhibited at several of this year's events.

"The London Coffee Festival was a good target market of 'urban professional' - as they had paid to get in, they seemed interested to sample and buy. However, the hours were too long, and it was not right for machine companies who didn't have much to offer to consumers.

"Caffè Culture was a sensible format and well-targeted. Bath was well publicised, a good location, with a lovely community feel - we sampled loads (there were a lot of 'sample-grabbers') but we sold well too, actually the same as for the London Coffee Festival. There were some strange exhibitors who didn't really fit the theme, but overall this was probably the most enjoyable show."

Jeremy Torz of Union Hand-Roasted is one of the most experienced veterans of many trade and end-user shows: "I agree that the consumer base which is interested in coffee as a subject is increasing. As consumer shows are pretty new to the coffee sector, there is probably a wave of people for whom all this is still new. We are happy at some mixed trade/consumer shows as we offer coffee to both professional and public, but for a machine distributor a public day is a waste of time."

At Drury, Marco Olmi did Caffè



Guy Wilmot in retail show action

Culture, the London Coffee Festival, and a partner company covered Bath. "There is nothing wrong with consumer shows, and in general, they cost hundreds rather than thousands.

"Bath has shown a big consumer interest, which is great, but I hope Caffè Culture doesn't go the same way, because consumers dilute a trade show. It is vital that we have a trade show. There is a time and place for both kinds of show - and they are separate times."

For Bath, organiser Linda Donaldson agreed that consumers are now keen on coffee as a subject. "Last year, it was 'how do you make a festival out of coffee?' and this year, there was a knowledge of coffee, and the demonstrations were packed. Taylors of Harrogate sold half as much coffee again as they did last year, and had to

courier more stock down overnight.

"The difference seems to be that trade companies who do not sell direct to the consumer, but who market only to the next person down the trade distribution line, often miss the real value of these events."

(This was not a problem for Lavazza, who reported a major success at Bath - they sold 40 domestic coffee machines in two days).

Sea Island, the importers of 'rare and exotic' coffees, did both London consumer events and the Bath consumer show. "Despite hurricane weather, the turnout was great and there was much interest (and purchases!) of our rare coffees. The London Tea & Coffee Festival was also a great success.

"This varied from the London Coffee Festival as it was an outside festival open to the public for free, so we got a lot more footfall and people from all walks of life and many different nationalities. Once again, we sold our best-sellers (Jamaica Blue Mountain, Hawaii Kona and Kopi Luwak) by the cup and as gift sets. A lot of people would try a cup of filter, then go ahead and buy a gift set.

"We are going to do more of these kind of events as the response from the public is great."

(The next notable consumer show is not a UK one - in Moscow, champion baristas from around the world will serve speciality coffee in Red Square during the military and cultural festival at the end of August. An attendance of 35,000 is expected.)

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