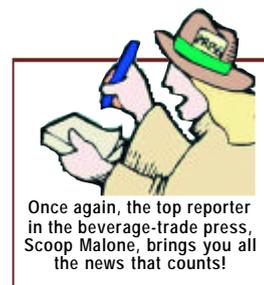


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COFFEE HOUSE



Once again, the top reporter in the beverage-trade press, Scoop Malone, brings you all the news that counts!

September 2011

The world's priciest coffee – is it ethically unacceptable?

There is a new wave of concern over the most expensive coffee in the world, with the suggestion that by selling the product, the British coffee trade is effectively supporting animal cruelty. Kopi Luwak, which translates roughly as 'cat coffee', is the product in which the cherries are eaten by the palm civet cats of Indonesia and other parts of south-east Asia, who digest the cherries and excrete the beans, which are then roasted and brewed – some people say that the digestive process gives the coffee a distinctive taste.

Although this coffee has for a long time been regarded as a novelty, it was for many years considered to be a relatively harmless one, in the belief that digested beans were gathered more by skill and luck than judgment, and their rarity value contributed to the very high cost of the resulting coffee.

However, there is now increasing disquiet about what has effectively become the factory-farming, or battery-farming, of civet cats.

The allegation is that farmers who realised the high price of the coffee have begun to keep these cats in tiny cages, and are allegedly force-feeding them coffee beans to produce the high-priced coffee.

(We have in the past reported that farming had begun, but had not known that it was intensive farming – one international newspaper has now reported a typical small farmer keeping 102 civets and collecting 550 pounds of beans a month).

The latest debate has been begun by Mike Haggerton, a café owner in Aberfoyle, who says that he has actually seen caged civets on a trip to origin, and who has been upset at the use of Kopi Luwak coffee being indirectly approved of in recent coffee events.

Effectively, he has said, allowing Kopi Luwak still to be seen as a harmless novelty contributes to more westerners thinking 'hmm, let's try that', which directly results in more animals losing their freedom by being caught and put in small cages for the rest of their lives. "Industry members who turn the other cheek are, by their silence, advocating animal cruelty," he has said.

Elsewhere in the coffee trade, there has been support.

"We all do something in our early days that embarrasses us, and for me it was the Luwak thing," said roaster Steve Leighton of Has Bean. "I was young and naive and thought it sounded fun. We bought 20 kilos of it in 2003, and I've regretted it ever since.



A civet eating coffee cherries. Photographer unknown

The farming thing didn't sound nice at all, and I do not condone any of that."

At the importer Mercanta, Steve Hurst told us: "The stories are quite correct – I have seen these battery farms myself and do not agree with them. If there is going to be a movement against Kopi Luwak, it is likely to be as a result of ourselves and others talking about this unpleasant practice. This coffee is a gimmick, and these poor animals need not be kept as chickens – but whenever someone is

going to pay a ridiculous price for something, then abuses will arise."

At Sea Island, the importer of 'rare and exotic' coffees, with several examples of cat coffee in its range, Guy Wilmot told us: "In the early days, Kopi Luwak would be collected in the wild from a 'latrine', a specific place where the civet would defecate as a means of marking its territory. However, more commonly today, captured civets are fed raw cherries.

"In the case of Sea Island Coffee, all the civet cat coffees that we offer are collected from civets in the wild."

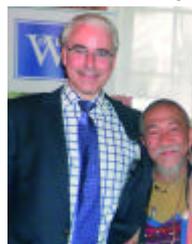
Mike Haggerton told us: "Blame doesn't lie entirely with the farmers. They are merely trying to make a living by responding to western demand.

"Any campaign to stop this therefore needs to re-educate farmers to understand that civet coffee is seen as a bad thing by westerners, so in future producing and selling it would be seen as a bad thing for them, the farmers."

New Thai coffee appears in UK

Probably the first roaster-retail café in the UK to serve Doi Chaang coffee from Thailand will be the Taunton shop owned by the Somerset roaster DJ Miles. This coffee is from the Chiang Rai region of northern Thailand, and was recently presented to British roasters by the importer DR Wakefield.

The intriguing story behind the coffee is that at one time, the most profitable industry in the Golden Triangle was opium. The King of Thailand encouraged sustainable crop substitutions to eliminate the opium trade, and Doi Chaang is the first international commercial result. Grower Wicha Promyong has travelled to London to present the beans to Simon Wakefield (pictured).



"What appealed to me was that the whole project is about the community helping themselves," Paul Marsh of DJ Miles told *Coffee House*. "The stories of what they've experienced – slavery, drugs, the lot – are horrifying. Their ethos now is that they want to help themselves, not just throw themselves on the mercy of the western world, which in this day and age is refreshing!

"It's a very engaging coffee. It's a good clean filter or cafetiere coffee... it may be a bit bland for a trendy London roaster, but we'll roast it onsite in our shop in Taunton and serve it there, and we'll sell it from our website."

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The notable Irish business Café Krem, run by equally notable barista Se Gorman, had its tenth birthday in August.

Taylor's of Harrogate has succeeded in a curious matter which involves the use of a county name as a product. Jeeves & Jericho of Oxford has now withdrawn its Yorkshire Brew tea after Taylor's, which makes Yorkshire Tea, claimed it had trademark rights to use the county name. A patent and trademark law firm has said that registering a location is indeed now possible following a change in the law to bring the UK rules in line with Europe.

Suki Tea from Belfast, used by many coffee-houses, now has a stall at one of the world's most famous street markets - it is in La Boqueria in Barcelona, one of the area's big tourist attractions. Suki has also opened up an export trade to Japanese tea houses.

There were less shoppers on the national high streets this summer, says the British Retail Consortium. The overall footfall was down 2.6 per cent, although high streets in Greater London, the South West and Scotland all experienced nominal rises. Meanwhile, the Association of Convenience Stores is the latest trade body to have met with Mary Portas to put a case before the publication of her government-backed review of high street business. To the best of our knowledge, the café trade did not make any representation before the deadline for doing so - our

efforts to inspire a presentation on behalf of the coffee trade drew only one response.

Pure Roast Coffee of Lisburn, Ireland, has won a £350,000 contract from the Emirates airline.

This year's Caffè Ritazza world barista championship will be held at St Katharine's Docks, London on September 21st. Because of the global reach of the brand, the organisers do refer to it as a 'world' contest.

The first Northern Coffee Tour has been planned as the first of a series of such events. It involves cyclists from the trade meeting at Laynes Espresso in Leeds, and travelling via Coffee Fix (Stockport) and North Tea Power (Manchester) to Bold Street Coffee of Liverpool.

Marco Beverage Systems, maker of water boilers and the notable Uber temperature-control water boiler, has expanded its showroom at Strixton in Northamptonshire and now offers a workshop and training room for distributors' engineers.

Living Ventures, the pub and café company, is to open a 'coffee and tea house plus deli' called Peppermint Bay in Manchester.

A new opening in Leeds is Café 164, which is a twin business to the neighbouring Bakery 164. The idea is to be an 'eclectic venue mixing art, music and live events with quality food and drink'. There will be exhibitions of local artists' and designers' work on constant rotation.



The owner of a coffee-house chain in Lithuania has brewed coffee through an Aeropress at a height of 20,000 ft. Nidas Kiuberis of the Coffee Inn chain was wearing an oxygen mask and protective clothing while ascending in a hot-air balloon, until reaching target height and brewing the cup, which he reports to have been 'as tasty' as on earth. But, apparently, not better, which begs the question... why do it?

Fortunately, the 2011 World Aeropress Championships are to be held at ground level, on Sunday October 23, during the HOST show in Milan, Italy. England has two contenders - John Gordon and James Hoffmann of Square Mile roasters.

Yet more arguments about street cafe furniture

In the continuing series of problems over 'street furniture', a national chain is now blamed for pushing a neighbouring business near to closure. In Hampshire, the Havant Fruit and Flowers business has displayed farm produce on the pavement for 14 years - but Costa has applied to put tables and chairs out next door. The grocer points out that smokers at these tables will mean that fruit and vegetables cannot be displayed nearby. Over three hundred people have signed a petition in support of the grocer.

In another bizarre incident, a café in York which already pays more than £500 for its table licence was asked to pay an extra £240 towards a street licence for a one-day Latin festival. The council had, it is reported, given festival organisers permission to clear the street for the day, having apparently overlooked the fact that existing businesses had already paid for the right to put street furniture out.

In Reigate, the 'café culture' has been accused of turning the town into 'an obstacle course for the disabled'. Following a complaint by a blind man, even the chairman of the local business guild agreed that careless use of tables and A-boards had been causing problems - an unusual aspect of the subject which was brought up was that when cafes put their A-boards out carelessly, and sometimes in different places, those with sight problems cannot get used to where the obstacles might be.

In Hockley, Nottingham, retailers have said that plans to establish a café culture area will 'kill other business in the area'. Some parking bays have been turned over to space for tables and chairs, and other businesses have complained that their delivery vehicles cannot now get near their shops.

More positively, the Gloucester city council has said that it will continue to allow cafes to put tables and chairs out free of charge; this decision was reached two years ago, and will be reviewed next year. The only adverse comment in the local media was the cautionary comment: 'putting tables outside pubs frequented by throngs of alkie doesn't qualify as café culture.'

And there appears to have been a surprisingly creative response in the case of a charity volunteer who was hauled before his local council for running a charity café from a caravan parked outside his home in Seaton Sluice. His business would raise about £250 in a weekend for a dog-rescue cause. Imaginatively, the council suggested he could have permission to run a mobile café from a nearby seafront, if he supported the council in a role of voluntary local environmental champion, 'acting as the eyes and ears of the council to tackle any environmental issues in the area'.

Three thousand people signed a petition against a new Costa site in Bristol's Gloucester Road, saying it would 'sound the death knell' for the area as a shopping street, and saying that the road now has twenty coffee shops in less than one kilometre.



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Experiment in social coffee generosity ends in tears

One of the most fascinating developments of the American 'pay it forward' habit has collapsed in a certain amount of internet abuse.

In America, there has long been a quite charming common practice that a customer might buy a coffee at a drive-thru and, out of sheer kindness, pay for the drink for the next person in line, whoever that might be. In some cases, the next person in line has then bought a coffee for the person behind them, and so on – there have been 'chains' of generosity which have stretched to thousands of consumers.

A computer developer, Jonathan Stark, recently devised an online experiment of the same practice, using modern cashless payment methods. He took the image of his Starbucks 'card' from his i-phone, posted it online, put a few dollars on his account, and invited anyone else to use it to buy themselves coffee, in the hope that they too would deposit some money on the card so that the next person to come along could also have a coffee.

The experiment drew vast interest, and at one stage there were several thousand dollars in credit on the card. Then a computer hacker created a method of transferring that money away from the card. He claimed it had gone to charity, but his actions provoked vast fury among consumers, and Starbucks closed down Jonathan Stark's card in an attempt to defuse the situation (although they said, unofficially, that they admired his experiment).

Mr Stark, while disappointed at the hacker's action, has promised to continue the experiment in a different form.



Jonathan Stark's Starbucks card, copied for the world to share

Our recent feature on winners of Great Taste awards missed one out - and perhaps not unreasonably, because we had not expected to find a coffee roaster winning an award for a cake. But it happened - Atkinsons of Lancaster actually won an award for their Christmas Pudding cake. We confess to knowing very little about it, and we certainly haven't had the chance to taste it, but from what we can learn, it was 'a happy accident' of an experiment.

Masteroast, the large private-label coffee roaster, is about to celebrate thirty years in business. The company is to stage a 'Bean Bash' at its Peterborough HQ on 30 September, bang on the anniversary of its formation. The event will also mark the opening of a new roastery and the unveiling of its new Neuhaus-Neotec equipment.

Yael Rose, whose tea and coffee festival event at the South Bank Centre in spring was well received by the beverage trade, will run another event at the same venue in November, and probably follow with a third at the South Bank in March next year. The event takes place from Friday 18th to Sunday 20th November 2011, 11am - 8pm daily (6pm on Sunday) at South Bank Centre Square. Admission is free.

The Wicked Coffee Company in Wetherby has won a contract from Roadchef to supply coffee at its 27 service sites, immediately after having renewed its contract with the National Union of Student Services to supply 120 universities with beverages and equipment for a further three years. Fergus Walsh, managing director (or 'chief bean') of Wicked Coffee, says that Wicked's sales have grown 30 per cent in a year.

A tea company in Gloucester has managed to sell tea to China. Only Natural Products, which runs The Tea Factory in Gloucester, is selling

herbal teas to Shanghai and Guangzhou, and as the buyers collect the products, they have no shipping costs! The company has been bagging teas for about a year, at 1,250 traditional square bags a minute, and has made the pointed remark that "at a time when all other major tea manufacturers are taking production abroad, it was important to us to produce in the UK."

A former coffee shop has now turned into a traditional tea room in Uttoxeter - the Vintage Tea Emporium has opened up in what was the Inspirations coffee shop, in Market Place. The business will double as a handicraft centre offering unique crafts of bygone years. Plans are for the staff to wear 1940s style dresses.



You can always tell when the seasons are changing, because *Beyond the Bean* comes out with a new catalogue of products and menu ideas for the cafe-bar. The winter one has just made its appearance - you can get a copy from 0117 953 3522.

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The Children's Food Campaign has criticised soft drinks marketing to children through pictures of fruit on the packaging - the body claims that some such drinks have as little as five per cent fruit content. The British Soft Drinks Association said the report is 'mistaken'.

The Caffe Nero chain will now offer free w-fi access in its British high street cafes. The move comes at a time when some café chains have removed wi-fi from their cafes, for fear of 'camping', in which laptop users dominate tables for hours at a time, for the price of only one coffee.

The latest in a series of café hauntings is in the new Grayz on the Hill tea-room in Lincoln - the decorators reported hearing creaks and footsteps while renovating the building, and on one occasion saw a disembodied hand descending a staircase. Meanwhile, at the Delapre Abbey tea rooms, Northampton, ghosthunters say they have 'picked up' the spirits of a woman and her dog. One ghosthunter said they had seen a woman, believed to be one who died in the building in 1943. He said: "I could smell her perfume but she did not really want to say too much."

An unusual feature of the new Coffee Kitchen cafe in Cockermouth is that the owner is a supporter of the Real Bread Campaign - the business will double as a coffee house and a baker of speciality breads.

Two cafes have withdrawn from a local scheme near Wokingham, in which businesses were asked to

make their toilet facilities available to all shoppers, not just their own customers. As has happened in many areas, this is a substitute for public facilities which have been closed as cost-saving measures. Costa was the first café to pull out of the scheme, and now the local Cafe Pandilla has withdrawn in protest against mis-use, mess and vandalism.

The owner of the Coffee Bean in Barrow has told the local paper that he was forced to close down following roadworks outside his door which over-ran for two months - he said the business 'never recovered from the disruption caused'.

Coffee and sandwich shops account for almost one in three eating and drinking occasions in the north, according to a study by the business research firm Deloitte. This is well ahead of the performance of the pub sector, and the findings also suggest that pubs in the north will suffer the biggest downturn in the next six months. A spokesman for Deloitte in Leeds, said: "The survey demonstrates just how resilient café culture is in the North."

Speciality coffee has made commuters in Folkestone change their choice of railway station, says the local press. Neil Gibson's three-wheeled GoGo Espresso! van has had a sharp rise in business outside Folkestone West station since the café in the Central station closed for renovation. Apparently commuters prefer to walk to the other station rather than go without coffee.

According to 'research', coffee takes over the world again...

We are often wary of 'research findings', which are often a ruse to create a story where none really exists. One of the most curious silly season stories in the daily press during August was about research by a kitchen equipment company, which reported being 'shocked' that 'the amount the average person is forking out each year on high street coffee is as much as your average yearly electricity bill or your annual gym membership.'

One printed story said: 'research shows we spend £430million a week on 511 million cups'.

The general press swallowed all this unquestioningly, but this magazine felt bound to ask for confirmation of that figure, pointing out that this would give an annual out-of-home coffee market of some twenty billion pounds, which the industry has never claimed. Jeffrey Young of Allegra Strategies, who always enthusiastically reports the increasing sales of the coffee shop sector, has confirmed to us that: "this would mean that coffee makes up half

of the entire UK eating-out market, including food at all restaurants, pub restaurants, and contract catering!"

A spokesman for the company confirmed their figure, and said that their research had been done by a specialist consultant, who had questioned 2,000 volunteer interviewees.

Rather illogically, having claimed such a vast figure, the researcher went on to suggest that 'the recession has taken its toll with 66 per cent of coffee drinkers increasingly choosing to make their coffee at home!'

Miko Coffee has had an orchid named after its Puro organic Fairtrade coffee. The company is active in rainforest conservation (although it opts not to be allied with the Rainforest Alliance) and the orchid, new to science and now named 'Teagueia Puroana', was discovered in an Ecuador rainforest reserve owned by the company.

The brand will also be producing a documentary film about the situation of farmers in Brazil, where Miko is buying more rainforest, and the Congo.

Coffee marketeers - avoid the taste-note cliché trap!

The remarkable lack of imagination shown by coffee brands in their product descriptions has often come in for criticism - and this from an industry that always demands that its product be considered 'like wine'. And if you don't believe it, just ask the judges at the Great Taste awards! It turns out that we are not the only trade to suffer from an inability to describe our products appealingly. In the entertaining and informative new book *Let Me Tell You About Beer*, the UK's top female beer writer, Melissa Cole (an old friend of ours from past magazines) says: "for more than a decade, I've had to fight through a world of beer labels that have said nothing more enticing than 'a hoppy, malty beer with a bitter finish'. Really? A beer made with hops and malt will have a taste of hops and malt, and will have a bitter finish from the hops! Where's the incentive for anyone to come from the wonderfully-described world of wine and spirits?" You might just as well, adds Melissa, say that fish tastes fishy, fruit tastes fruity, and air is airy. Now look at your own coffee descriptions and see if this rings any bells...



Melissa Cole

(For beer fans in the coffee trade, and we know there are many, Mel's book is on sale from October 10 at £14.99.)

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The news website is www.coffee-house.org.uk
The newsfeed is boughtonscoffeehouse.wordpress.com

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Hanging around in the coffee bar...

These unusual coffee-house chairs, in no contact with the floor, are in use at Heathrow airport, but we find that the Pier Antonio Bonacina egg chair is a stock item available to any café – it's from the Andy Thornton furniture company, who tell us that the product is supplied with a heavy duty chain, and that furnishers usually fit it direct to a steel beam. We are not allowed to give a price, but as you might expect, it's a fairly high-end item.

The 'revolt' was not a plot - Twinings

Twinings has denied that a press furore over one of its blends was a deliberate marketing ploy to gain attention.

The daily press reported that tea-drinkers were 'rising in revolt', because the brand had reformulated its Earl Grey blend, and further reports suggested that Twinings might have deliberately encouraged the online coverage. However, all the kerfuffle occurred a clear four months after the reformulation, and Twinings has suggested that the press were simply looking for a 'silly season' shock story.

Another 'silly season' story has been the suggestion that the pistachio nut could provide a new caffeine-free alternative to coffee, and can be given largely the same taste and aroma. One press report says that the possibility 'has caused coffee manufacturers sleepless nights'. However, there seems to be very little evidence of this - those from the coffee trade whose opinions were sought by the daily press were, at best, polite without being enthusiastic.

The local press in Yorkshire has given credit to football coach Steve Clark for turning round a pub with a history of violence - by changing it into a neighbourhood coffee house. The Marsh House pub had been shut down on several occasions for incidents involving swords and guns - the new owner reportedly said: "I knew about its reputation but it didn't bother me," and turned it into the Marshmallow coffee shop.

Greggs, the high-street bakery with a strong coffee interest, has a 4.2 per cent rise in sales for the past six months, to £335 million. Operating profits were £17.3 million. Greggs have told us that freshly ground bean-to-cup Fairtrade coffee sales for the period were up 23 per cent, and that it is deliberately setting its prices 25-30 per cent lower than other high street coffee chains.

The Urban Coffee Company of Birmingham has celebrated its second year, and reports having sold 182,000 cups of coffee in its first year, at a turnover of £300,000.

Australian coffee shops, we are told, are now taking steps to deal with repetitive strain injury caused to baristas by the constant motions of tamping and steam-arm operation. It is suggested that counter-height adjustments and better tamping techniques help, but others have adopted yoga moves. "Learning correct tamping posture the yoga way and some stretching moves for joints and muscles go a long way toward preventing 'barista wrist'," we are told.

The operators of a franchised Coffee Republic outlet in Liverpool have now created Gourmet Kingdom, a venture which sees the coffee shop rebranded as Gourmet Coffee.

Coffee Republic is to work with community pharmacy and healthcare provider Lloyds Pharmacy in providing coffee bars for a new Health Village concept. The first will be at Brent South shopping park.

Water cooler supplier Eden Springs has acquired the Shakespeare Coffee Company - this is the biggest Eden acquisition in Europe.

One of the most notable espresso-and-cakes cafes in London, Bea's of Bloomsbury, is the subject of the book *Tea with Bea: Recipes from Bea's*. To tie in with it, the idea was to run a series of 'baking the book' classes.

The relatively-new Laynes espresso bar in Leeds has joined the number of specialist outlets to try a tea event - "we thought there may just be enough interest to run a 'tea' night along with our coffee tastings that have been so popular recently," Dave Olejnik told us. "It sold out in under a day!"

One of the great literary cafes and intellectual hang-outs of Buenos Aires, the Cafe Richmond, has been occupied by the staff in protest - they arrived one day to find the business closed down and all the historic furniture removed, without warning, so that the business can be turned into a sportswear shop.

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An unusual move for the home coffee market is about to be made by one of the major suppliers to the hotel trade.

It comes from Cafe du Monde, whose unique business angle is its system for taking high-quality filter coffee to individual hotel rooms - the company's Service en Chambre system is based on a correctly-portioned cafetiere bag which allows guests to brew coffee properly, and also gives chambermaids a simple way of clearing up without having to clean a cafetiere plunger.

The idea has worked, and there is now a string of hotels who take the system, which is also put out as a cost-effective system for gastro-pubs who want to provide a quality coffee offer without having to worry about equipment and training.

The new move is the development into domestic sales. This is Chez Toi, which takes the concept of high-quality cafetiere coffee direct to the home user, but with an interesting marketing twist.

This system uses the conventional cafetiere system, not the easy-clean hotel bag. The offer is of eight different coffees (seven origins and one decaf) in 13gm portioned sachets for a one-person cafetiere.

There are several new aspects to the idea.

Several of the top roasters already do a scheme whereby they send out packs of great coffee every month to subscribers, but some of them are for customers of semi-geek standard, who probably have a domestic espresso machine. The Chez Toi system requires nothing more than a cafetiere, recognising that the domestic customer does now want 'great' coffee, but is not always interested in the mechanics of brewing.

"The public is always getting more discerning," remarks Café du Monde's managing director, David Latchem. "Although our company began by explaining to hoteliers about great coffee, I recently discovered that I now seem to be talking to more people who know as much about coffee as I do! The bar keeps getting raised, and so I think the time is right for the public to buy into origins."

The way to this market was not through bags of 250gm or even 125gm - not all consumers who appreciate coffee get through a great deal of it every month, so there would be a freshness problem.

"The geeks who subscribe to the monthly coffees from the craft roasters are not people who have a loyalty to a brand, because their interest is in experimenting all the time with different new coffees. But I want loyalty to the idea of great coffees, and I do need loyalty to a brand... I want their loyalty to my great coffee."

The other problem was of getting the customer to know about the product. Many of the craft roasters who have built up loyal online businesses will

Cafe du Monde's home run



confess readily that they did little or no internet 'marketing' - coffee enthusiasts just seem to have found their offerings. David Latchem had to be a little more scientific.

"Well, Chez Toi did a thousand pounds off the website in its first week, without any promotion at all - but we



David Latchem and his single-origin sachets



can't rely on that, and I do think we have thought the marketing through.

"We have always had calls saying 'we had your coffee in this hotel, can we buy it?', and most of the time we have said 'yes'. We have noted that they have picked up on good coffee and taken the trouble to call us.

"So the idea now is that the Chez Toi order booklet will be given out in hotel rooms, as part of the Service en Chambre offer. Every bedroom that offers Service en Chambre will also have a gift sachet, identified as given by the hotel, but marked 'not for use in the hotel'... and it can't be, because the Service en Chambre cafetiere is not a normal one, but adapted for our bag.

"So the customer takes the gift sample and the order booklet home. That booklet has a code which identifies the hotel they were in - if they order from the Chez Toi website, the code brings up a unique shopping page for that hotel, a very innocent, light joint marketing exercise which gives the hotel a chance to stay in touch with that guest.

"If the guest buys Chez Toi, then the hotel gets a commission on the sale - which is why they are not going to be upset about us putting the booklet in the bedrooms! Even if the consumer then introduces Chez Toi to their friends, the hotel will still get commission on any referral sale.

"We can see a lot of cross-marketing here. In an ideal world, it could mean that Service en Chambre ends up as a no-cost coffee service for the caterer."

Among the other unusual features of the scheme are the choices of coffee, and the format of the sachet.

"We have done something very new and adventurous here. The mantra of

packaging is to find a seal which is a barrier to oxidation, but which is also recyclable.

"Much coffee packaging is aluminium, which is not regarded as an environmentally-friendly substance. Our roaster, Masteroast, already has a system on filter coffee packaging which reduces the amount of aluminium content considerably. Now, on the Chez Toi sachets, there is no aluminium whatsoever, which makes it extremely ecologically friendly and very cutting-edge progress towards fully recyclable packaging... and it gives the coffee a shelf life of twelve months."

Has his work with hotels produced any information about consumers' tastes in coffee?

"I'm not a coffee geek, and I take the view that my tastes are probably the same as 80 per cent of the population. What I have learned is that for most people, smoothness, quality, and soft, rounded flavours work, so our general idea is that good Colombian and good Kenyan AA are worth sticking with, and our El Salvador has always done well."

The range also includes a shade-grown Dattera, which effectively argues that Brazilian coffee should be seen as a good cafetiere single-origin, and not just a convenient espresso-blend ingredient.

"Brazil was always thought of as a filler in blends, and I used to think it was nothing special," agrees David Latchem. However, I decided I certainly wasn't going to give them any old Santos, so we went for the highest quality we could, and it turned out to be beautiful. It made me want to go and learn about Brazil all over again."

The El Salvador Monte Sion is a Rainforest Alliance coffee described as 'one of the top ten certified coffees in the world'. That, it turns out, was a judgment from a contest held by the American speciality coffee association. The Chez Toi Sumatran is a Fairtrade, the Ethiopian is a Yirgacheffe, and the Jamaica Blue Mountain is from the Wallenford Estate.

"We spent a lot of time deciding which estate to use. We don't use this in Service en Chambre, so I can't say whether it already performs in the hotel sector, but I do believe that hotel operators should make more of this - if your cafetiere coffee is £2.95, sell the JBM as the finest coffee in the world, at £5.95, and promote the certificate of authenticity!"

"If people in some hotels are paying a fiver for a brandy or a malt whisky, this is not going to put them off... we shall explore and develop this."



Taylorson (right) and company scientist work on the Syrupodic Table

Is this the way to Amaretto?

There are few things we like more than products which are marketed with a sense of humour... and we have rather come to expect that from John Taylorson, whose Malmesbury Syrup flavourings are created in a field in the west of England, taking their water content from a natural stream.

The more scientifically educated of our readers will know of the Periodic Table, which is the standard reference of chemical elements, (a 'tabular display of the 118 known chemical elements organized by selected properties of their atomic structures' we are told) and which also uses the common one- or two-letter abbreviations for chemical substances. There may be a certain element of tongue-in-cheek about the new display poster produced by Taylorson - the Syrupodic Table, purporting to show the essential make-up of major coffee flavourings, using some chemical-like abbreviations which we haven't seen before, yet which seem strangely familiar. When you work out that MnCH₂ refers to mint chocolate, you begin to get the drift - Bn2Fe is of course the formula for Banoffee. And there are some new ones which will fool even the most experienced flavourist - XmaCa is Taylorson's new Christmas Cake flavour.

For display copies of the Syrupodic Table, call 01666 577379.

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St_bY	Bn_Fe	ESp	Van ₂



Here's a fascinating gift set which we have discovered in the catalogue of Cream Supplies, which is probably the biggest UK wholesaler of flavoured syrups, among other things. In the 'barista supplies' section, we discovered this - a gift starter kit for those who want to get to know the Aeropress. Not just an Aeropress, together with Mini Porlex hand grinder, timer, scales and thermometer, but a copy of the excellent book *Coffee with Tim Wendelboe*, by the top-class Norwegian barista champion. Details: 0845 226 3024



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Where does the sharp end of the coffee trade get its 'management services' consultancy?

From its suppliers - it is often said that the sharp end of a trade has every right to demand as much support as possible from its trade suppliers, and, says Elaine Higginson of United Coffee, the demands from today's beverage trade are more than ever before.

And she approves of it.

United Coffee is what used to be First Choice - Elaine Higginson arrived there during the mid-90s, rose to become managing director, and drove business from less than a million to a quite staggering figure today. A reference to the British group's turnover now being over fifty million pounds is met with a quite gentle correction: "more than that... somewhere north of eighty million at the moment."

United Coffee is now enormous - it grew by First Choice being taken over by the giant European group Drie Mollen, which already owned the Gala coffee roastery in England (the home of Lyons, among other brands).

The whole group was renamed United Coffee, with a turnover in hundreds of millions of euros, and last year First Choice and Gala were integrated under Elaine's management, following which she bought Cooper's Coffee of Yorkshire.

And yet, the group has not gone down the faceless corporate route. In the UK, United Coffee has clearly been hiring 'real coffee people', and several noted competition baristas have recently cropped up working for the brand.

"We supply right across the board - we're into retail private-label take-home, which is Tesco and Waitrose, we have the Lyons brand, which is being re-launched in October and will support the poppy appeal, we have the 'retail away-from-home', which is the Starbucks kind of business, and we have contract and public catering.

"We have a leisure channel, which is hotels, restaurants and pub chains. We have events, and this year we did the Buckingham Palace garden parties, Royal Ascot, the Chelsea Flower Show (we served 40,000 coffees!) and the open golf at Sandwich.

"Gala has become 'the United Coffee roasting facility', we've doubled volume in a year to well over seven thousand tonnes, and we may now roast more coffee in the UK than anyone else."

That kind of speech shows that Elaine Higginson is a seller - indeed, she has gone on record herself as simply saying 'I sell coffee machines'. But behind that lies a deeper belief in what selling actually involves, and a belief in practical customer service.

"Our family business was a baker and confectioner in Crieff. I got involved in that fairly quickly, because I used to get hauled in at 5am on a Saturday to carry the cream cakes... and that's where I was shown the prin-

"The big message is... success isn't luck!"

ciples of customer service, but also the principles of selling, and display.

"I realised these were things I wanted to do... but the family cake business wasn't it! So as I was a bit of a rebel, I went travelling, started work with Forte, then to Bewley's and now I've been in coffee for twenty years."

Machine salespeople in some parts of the coffee trade have come in for a hard time... there have been many dark mutterings about those who deliberately over-specify equipment for that extra bit of commission. By contrast, United has always spoken quite vehemently about its belief in customer service, and its investment in its staff - this, says Elaine Higginson, is more than talk.

"Those who just 'sell' to the trade don't have a full package. The old days of salesmen are long gone - and we've never had typical salespeople. We have strategic planning managers."

But don't many companies give such fancy titles to people who are really just salespeople?

"No! We don't have 'consultants' who are really just salesmen - we have consultants who can consult.

"Of course, we also have 'hunters', because there's a science behind finding the right customers. It isn't luck that we're known for being a supplier to the big names.

"That's why we're in double-digit growth in tough times. Business today is character-building stuff, and it's not for the faint-hearted. This is where you realise that management teams really come into their own, and where you realise that people really have to work together.

"Business today is character-building stuff, and it's not for the faint-hearted. This is where you realise that people really have to work together."

- Elaine Higginson

"In tough times, we've seen a lot of suppliers compromise on their quality and customer service. We haven't - to a trade customer, that's partnership."

Customer service, she says, goes two ways along the trade chain. A supplier cannot only think of their trade customer - they should be working on how that trade customer interacts in turn with their own customer, the consumer. Some people might think this an intrusion, others say it is constructive helpful partnership at work.

"If we deliberately work at helping a customer put blue sky between them and their competitors, we put the same



The COFFEE HOUSE
interview

distance between ourselves and their other potential suppliers.

"You have to look at a trade relationship chain and take it back to the basic principles, right down to being realistic about what you can deliver, and what you're going to offer."

The standard old line is about 'listening to customers'. You can get that wrong, laughs Elaine Higginson.

"In 2004, we put in an automatic telephone answering system, thinking that was 'the thing to do'. But so many people said 'God, Elaine, why did you do that?', that it reminded us that we really did have to listen to the customer - and we had to listen on every call, because this is what makes you understand what your customer expects from you.

"It reminded us that our trade customer is still a consumer, in that we are

to help them come up with a competitive offer, and expect us to help them work strategically.

"When you break it down, it all starts with the consumer, who is our customer's customer. So, we are always thinking of the consumer, and not just of our trade customer... we start thinking at our trade customer's counter.

"These trade customers are now, effectively, outsourcing a lot of their management work - they're pushing a lot of it back up the supply chain, and they expect us to do it!

"They now expect things like 'cost avoidance', which is that when they know costs are going up in everything from coffee to paper cups, then they want to know what are we going to do to help them avoid their costs rising. We have to be thinking about things like how much our clients' staff turn over, and how we can help them improve it.

"Our trade clients are expecting more marketing help from us, which is why we now have our own creative design studio... we even now do PR for some of them!"

Is all this just for her big-name national chain clients?

"No! It's the same with serving an independent coffee bar. We have a lot of small independent customers, and we have some really great examples of helping small operators - we have recently picked up one who was serving two coffees a day... and now does 200.

"The needs of the independent coffee bar operator may well be very different from our chain customers. They might best be served by us helping illustrate the lifestyle costs of different espresso machines."

There is, observes Elaine Higginson, a significant difference between making the right noises about customer service, and about putting it into operation.

"This is an expensive subject... but the message here is that it isn't luck. We've got to this size of business because we have invested in our people and our systems, and we've invested in our support to our customers. We are Investors in People with our staff, and our Investors in Coffee programme is very similar, for our trade customers - it's a set of guiding principles, from crop to cup, and a very important thing we work on is formal qualification for coffee and barista skills."

There is a moment of reflection and then laugh of mock resignation, as Elaine Higginson adds: "historically, all we had to do was sell coffee and fix machines..."

There is an fascinating development in interesting tea-rooms in Manchester. Tea has become 'cool', and several genuinely interesting new venues have opened up.

The North Tea Power business has been getting a lot attention as a 'must-see' venue - here, Wayne Lew and Jayne Spindler prepare their drinks in an extremely careful and detailed manner, which is why one online review of the café began with the question: 'how many hipsters does it take to make a cup of tea?'

Manchester's 'northern quarter' is just off the main area of the big central shopping arcades - as in many cities, it is the kind of newly-fashionable area which you would not have walked down alone 30 years ago, but which is now beginning to be taken over by trendy small businesses, although they still sit beside a few remaining sex shops and pawnbrokers.

North Tea Power sits in a dark walkway under a Victorian ironwork balcony; outside are tables on a raised pavement, and inside are some plain wooden tables and some formica. A typical touch is a pile of Penguin paperbacks in the original old covers, and there are several bikes parked inside the café... yes, inside! As expected, we saw some customers working on laptops, but two were playing cards, which shows just how relaxed a place it is.

The extremely unusual aspect of North Tea Power is the constant reference to espresso even on the tea menu - there is the choice of black or green tea brewed as Americano, cappuccino or latte, at £1.90. It turns out that their technique is to brew tea in a modified portafilter on a La Marzocco machine. To allow for this, of course, the tea is not large loose-leaf, but 'dust' - however, as has been pointed out by tea experts, there is nothing wrong with dust so long as it is good dust.

The menu is full of unusual items. A typical one is the marmalade tea, a northern twist on the 'thé citron'. It's a shot of Kenyan tea - with a shot of marmalade.

There is an equally interesting coffee offer. Beside the La Marzocco stands a

The cool teashops of Manchester

'How many hipsters does it take to make a cup of tea?' asked an online reviewer. In the north, top-class tea is now an 'in' drink



An ounce of loyal tea is worth a pound of cleverness - the Teacup on Thomas Street.

ceramic filter station, neatly built from what appears to be copper plumbing pipe, and on request, Wayne will brew through an Aeropress, using the inverse or 'upside-down' method (there is a big argument among Aeropress

fans as to the value of the oils in brewed coffee and whether the upside down technique controls the oils best... but there are many people who say it doesn't matter at all!)

Perhaps not surprisingly, Jane told us that North Tea

Power took several months to build up its clientele - but now, those who have 'got it' are remaining notably loyal.

Just a few steps around the corner is Teacup on Thomas Street, which is owned by a chap called Andy Carthy, whose alter ego is Mr Scruff, a festival DJ who sells his own Make Us A Brew

teabag range at his live shows. (This is probably why all the smoothies are music-titled - the Mungo Jerry is a pomegranate and strawberry, and the Blues Brother is pomegranate and

blueberry).

This venue is rather more what you would expect of a 'tea room' - very neat menus and waitress service, but this café also features some unusual menu items, not least of which is the 'piche', or 'the quiche that wants to be a pie'.

The tea menu gives a choice of the owner's own bags in pots (£2.20) or a range of loose leaf teas from Assam (£3.45) to jasmine pearls at over £4 and flowering teas at almost a fiver. Cupcakes are £2.50, cakes up to £3.95, and truffles a pound each - the staff wear t-shirts with the legend 'nobody knows the truffles I've seen'!

The serving of the conventional loose tea is in a form we had not seen before. Curiously, our tea (a large leaf Darjeeling) came in one of two red pots, served with a timer and strainer. The instructions from the server were 'wait three minutes, and pour from one pot through the strainer into the other pot, then into the cup'.

Whichever way you look at it, new methods and offers certainly are breathing new life into the concept of the tea-room.



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Filter work from Wayne of North Tea Power - the inverted Aeropress is next to the four filter cones

Chocolate - the real story, from Puritans to slavery

Too many café operators, it is widely agreed, sell chocolate without any of the thought they give to their coffee or their tea - for many parts of the café trade, 'hot chocolate' is a generic product.

But it is not - chocolate is a fascinating product in its own right, and for those who enjoy knowing something about the sourcing of their coffee and tea, this is a good introduction to how their chocolate product reached the catering trade.

It comes from a reliable source - the writer is Deborah Cadbury, of the family itself.

The early chocolate trade was almost inextricably bound up with Puritanism - Cadbury, Fry and Rowntree were all Quakers (as were the Hersheys in America). This was more than just religious belief - Quakers are bound by rules, and they cannot set up in business if they cannot, realistically, pay their bills and meet their obligations (fairly different from the way that some suppliers do business today!)

And Quakers feel truly responsible for their staff - the writer Ruskin had said that 'profit is only legitimate if it is made without harming the greater good to society', to which Cadburys responded by pioneering the idea of model villages for their workers to live in, and brought in revolutionary ideas like sick pay.

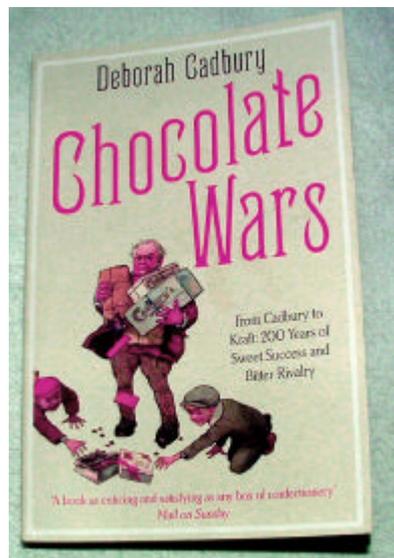
However, at first the social ideals were of far higher quality than the chocolate - indeed, in the early 1800s, the chocolate of the time must have been pretty rough stuff.

Not only was the cocoa bean very roughly prepared, but the true contents of a drink did not bear investigation - in the 1860s a consumer guide appeared showing how to tell whether a chocolate drink featured animal fat, starches, or even red lead. (This was a time when many foodstuffs were 'bulked up' with any kind of contaminant, anything from chalk to brick dust.)

And that, curiously, was what helped the Cadbury's make their first big move.

For many years, Cadbury was by far the smallest of the chocolate companies - Fry's was big and growing, Rowntree was fairly big yet largely getting nowhere, but by the 1860s the Cadburys were more or less out of money, which according to Quaker principles means they could not honourably continue trading.

At about this same time, van Houten in Holland came up with his own new, purer method of refining chocolate, and a chap called Lindt invented



Anyone who wants to make a really good job of selling a product has to know something about it - and this is the fascinating history of the chocolate trade

'conching', a way of rolling and grinding cocoa and drawing air into the mix, which effectively produced the first chocolate that wasn't hard enough to break teeth.

The two Cadbury brothers spent their last money on van Houten's equipment, and then did two things that Quakers aren't supposed to do. First, they advertised. This was clever - in spite of the doubtful contents, chocolate at the time was promoted as a health drink.

So they sent their new purer chocolate to doctors, who commended its lack of foreign matter, which led to a lot of approving press coverage, and Cadbury capitalised on that by advertising for the first time, with the slogan 'absolutely pure, therefore the best'.

'Imagine the consternation ... chocolate strongly backed by Quaker principles was coming from a hotbed of child slavery.'

They then invented the 'box of chocolates', in an attempt to copy the French chocolatiers. Again, this was against the Quaker principle of plainness - but it worked.

This was a time of vast progress in chocolate, with activity both in product development and some odd business methods - Rowntree actually resorted to blatant industrial espionage, paying employees of other companies to tell everything they knew.

The Cadburys stuck to their ethics, although it was difficult - they eventually became part of 'a growing breed of successful Quakers who maintained their faith without turning their backs on material prosperity'.

In this, they did rather better than an

American chap called Hershey, who was of only part-Quaker upbringing, and so when his business was in danger of failing, he 'turned his back on Puritan severity', and promoted as if his life depended on it. The Hershey bar turned out to be an American icon.

Meanwhile, Henri Nestle was making the really big move, by inventing a dried baby-milk powder, which saved the lives of a vast number of babies who could not be breast-fed - one such sick baby was the child of a Swiss chocolatier, who experimented by combining milk powder and cocoa... the result was the first instant milk-chocolate drink.

And that was when the concept of the chocolate drink took off all over the world - even in South Africa, because the workers in the gold mines were so hot in the mines two miles underground that when they returned to the surface, they began shivering. The answer was cocoa.

The next ethical twist was one that nobody saw coming - imagine the consternation when it was discovered that British chocolate, so strongly backed by Quaker principles, was coming from Sao Tome... a hotbed of child slavery (and, curiously, an origin which has come to be promoted all over again this year, but now under Fairtrade terms!) How on earth did the Quakers get round the slavery issue? Typically, they faced it head-on and combined in a political action which turned into an international issue.

That is one typical story in a book which does more than give useful knowledge in selling chocolate - it is a terrific social history.

Chocolate Wars, from Cadbury to Kraft, by Deborah Cadbury. Harper Press £9.99. ISBN 978-0-00-732557-3

There is now some debate over recent press reports that a daily dose of chocolate could 'slash the risk of developing heart-disease by a third'. The daily papers took the story up with some glee - well, it is their silly season - and have reported that while it has long been known that a small amount of dark chocolate has high antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, it is now thought that a high intake of chocolate in general can lead to a 33 per cent reduction in risk of developing heart disease, and a 29 per cent reduction in the likelihood of a stroke. However, the British Heart Foundation has warned of caution, saying: 'the research didn't find if one particular type of chocolate is better than another. If you want to reduce your heart disease risk, there are much better places to start than with a box of chocolates!'

The most unusual chocolate bar on the market is due to appear before Christmas - it is the Very Peculiar Bar, and the main ingredient is... Marmite.

Chocolate Week this year runs from 10th-16th October. The main events are in London, with a chocolate show at Vinopolis on 15-16th, and apparently 350 other individual events around the UK.

Tate & Lyle says it has created a 'cocoa-replacement solution' using a high quality carob powder ingredient, called Carcao. The result is a fine powder with 'a naturally sweet taste'. The carob pods contain sweet pulp and seeds; the seeds make locust bean gum and the pulp is dried, roasted and ground into a powder. Tate and Lyle says it has enough of a 'familiar cocoa-like flavour and colouring' to be used as a partial cocoa replacement, and one of their experiments has been on a cocoa-type drink.

Unusual single-origin is the way forward in chocolate, says Jonathan Money of Cream Supplies, who has an unusual new product on the way. "Most hot choc mixes have far too much sugar in them.

"Our Mocado Azteca D'Oro Spiced is an example of one direction that hot chocolate will go - an increasing range of high quality pre-blended mixes using closer to origin beans. For certain, there will be pure origin offerings of hot chocolate appearing in cafes - to be drunk with or without milk or sugar."

"We are going to stock a 'raw chocolate' hot chocolate powder in the next few weeks. That should get people talking!"





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W2

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It is time for serious coffee house operators to embrace the concept of the single-origin chocolate - the idea of single-origin filter coffee is now well established, but the high-lighting of really great chocolate could be a major step ahead for many cafes.

On the face of it, that sounds like a fairly standard marketing pitch from a trade supplier, but it isn't - the opinion comes from a frontline coffee-shop owner, who is also one of the UK's few specialist chocolate café operators. He is Paul Morris, of the Chocolate Café in Ramsbottom, Lancashire, which is the site of one of the country's main consumer festivals - the annual Ramsbottom Chocolate Festival attracts around 28,000 people.

How did a small northern town become a centre for specialist chocolate?

"We decided to come back to Britain and work with chocolate after discovering it in Europe," explains Paul. "We used to have a property-management company in the south of France, which sounds glamorous, but mainly involved a lot of cleaning toilets.

"So we looked at 200 premises in the north-west, and no landlord would take the idea of a chocolate café seriously! Then we saw this, the landlord didn't laugh at us, and I didn't even bother asking the rent - I was that confident, I said 'we'll take it'."

Being in the front line gives Paul Morris the opportunity to assess what chocolate meets the British taste. The café trade always hears a lot about 'the continental taste', and many suppliers hopefully claim that we should be converting British customers to it, and selling dense liquid hot chocolate in shot sizes - but what does the British consumer really want?

"Cadburys dictated the British taste at first, until people began coming back from holiday in Italy and saying 'we want more from chocolate'. People are even looking for more than names like Ghirardelli and Barry Callebaut.

"So the old British idea of 'hot chocolate' is no longer acceptable. Certainly, now that even the local greasy spoon can serve a half-decent filter coffee, you are not going to get away with any old chocolate."

Are customers really that demanding?

"Yes, they are! When we started, we did serve an Italian powdered chocolate, and customers said they didn't want it. But do they want the very tiny sipping-chocolate of Barcelona? No - so we don't serve chocolate as a 'shot'.

"So it took us months of playing with recipes to find out what the British customer wants, and we now serve our chocolate as a milky drink, but served to their choice. The customers predominantly choose their chocolate by cocoa percentages, and we have wonderful 34 per cent Colombian which serves very well as a general house chocolate."

Single-origin - the big new trend in cafe chocolate?



"Create your own unique chocolate product, and the big operators won't have a chance of competing with you"

- Paul Morris on his chocolate-covered cakes and his saucer-side 'cigarillo'

At this point, the chocolate café owner finds himself catering for both the average chocolate drinker and the real enthusiast.

"Customers are now asking more for single origins," says Paul Morris, "and different origins produce very different tastes - a Colombian is very different from a Venezuelan, and from Papua New Guinea, which is a smoky chocolate, from volcanic soil.

"We have been in touch with Peter Dore-Smith of Kaffeine (the highly-regarded Antipodean café in London) who has been talking about him sorting



The chocolate-covered cakes

out his chocolate, because he's clever enough to know that customers are now wowed by the same things in chocolate as they are in coffee. If we were in central London, I'd certainly have a 'chocolate of the month'."

It has often been said that coffee house owners rely too much on wholesale generic chocolate, do not identify the chocolate they use, and very rarely consider matching it with their house coffee for use in mocha.

"We actually did research this ourselves, and I know a restaurateur who's been working on this for ten years. But certainly, most people do not.

"For a mocha, most people make an espresso and add chocolate - our way

is to start with the chocolate and add the espresso. We use our house molten liquid chocolate, mix that with the espresso, and then we add the latte milk."

It is also often suggested that flavoured hot chocolate should work, but few cafes have worked hard on it. Paul Morris has his own system and way of serving.

"Flavoured chocolate can work - we stock Zotter, which is Europe's only organic bean-to-bar chocolate, and they do make a flavoured range of small bars, which are designed to be put into hot milk. I have been in their factory, and I have seen the fruit being used, so I know it is real fruit and not a sugary flavouring.

"So, if you add their cinnamon and banana, you have added fruit to chocolate which is then dropped into milk to make the drink."

In the Chocolate Café, the makings of this are served on a special tray. The milk is in something like a latte glass, the Zotter bar is on the side, and the customer is provided with a metal whisk - they add the chocolate to the milk and mix it for themselves. At about £3.25, this method of flavoured hot chocolate is 'incredibly popular', says Paul Morris.

"The Zotter bars range from 32 per cent chocolate to 72 per cent, and the chilli one is certainly not for children - you have to be careful with chilli flavouring anyway, because it really can 'explode' in the mouth."

(Most chocolate fans specify their chocolate by the cocoa percentage - however, Paul Morris reports having recently heard two ladies talking in the shop and saying: 'they shouldn't be selling 100-per-cent chocolate as it's illegal... it's like cocaine' !)

For the café owner who sees serious profit in chocolate, the next stage is quite similar to coffee. Just as some café-owners see a future in 'roaster-retailing', so chocolate cafes can make their molten chocolate clearly visible, to attract the interest of customers. In Paul Morris' café, his customers can actually see molten chocolate being formed into bars, in a demonstration machine sited just off the main counter.

In chocolate, visibility is good. "We even hold pots of melted chocolate on top of our espresso machine to keep it warm," he grins. "Baristas just gasp in horror!"

The next and very ambitious step is roasting, which is again very similar to coffee. At the Manchester Food and Drink Festival in October, Paul Morris will demonstrate bean-to-bar chocolate for the first time, literally going through the whole process in front of the public.

So, what should the average coffee shop do to make better business from chocolate?

"Coffee shops should always have tempered chocolate on standby. Yes, people do think of paddle machines, but they're not thinking about anything beyond beverages. If a coffee shop owner is making any accompaniment at all to their coffee, then I very seriously suggest that they learn how to temper chocolate (this is essentially melting chocolate to ensure that all the constituent crystals are uniform, thus giving the right visual appearance, smoothness, and mouthfeel).

"This will open up a whole new revenue stream for you. Even if you just create a range of chocolate-covered coffee beans which is unique to you, not something you've bought by the ton, then you've created something the big boys won't be able to reach. Our first unique product was the chocolate pizza, without which we probably wouldn't have survived some of the early days... we invented it one Christmas, and it worked."

(Although it did lead to one curious complaint - a customer called to report that as soon as she put it in the oven, the chocolate melted!)

Paul Morris' usual saucer giveaway is the 'cigarillo' - a thin sliver of chocolate shaped into a pipe. "It releases the flavour immediately... now we sell them by the box."

Such unique products are a big benefit to an independent business, says Paul Morris.

"You must always have something that people can buy and take away and remember you for - we sell real cakes covered in our own chocolate, and the big cafes haven't a chance of doing anything like this!"



Real chocolate – more profitable than cream and marshmallow?

Turning chocolate drink sales into an 'experience' can have a big effect on revenue, says Paul Eagles, founder of the relatively new Kokoa Collection.

His basic concept is to give the café operator a way of offering the customer a choice of white, milk or dark, and within that a choice by origin. This, he suggests, will help the trade overcome prejudices from the 'real chocolate' fans, who are just as demanding as 'real coffee' fans.

"An interesting thing is that people who are fans of genuine chocolate would never dream of buying a hot chocolate from a coffee shop, as they think it synonymous with a sweet drink, cream and marshmallows," he told us.

"Kokoa Collection has helped chocolate to be regarded as a grown-up drink.

"What I have done is set up a range of hot chocolates for a coffee operator to offer so that a customer can find a drink that suits their own taste preferences. Nobody dares to simply ask for 'a coffee' any more, and likewise, the consumers' tastebuds for chocolate really are distinct. We have proved this at consumer events."

A well-judged 'range' of chocolate will broaden customer base and increase revenue, he argues.

"My chocolate varies from a sweet white, to a lowest-sugar dark.

"The sweetest white, to which natural vanilla adds flavour, is growing in demand in coffee shops, because it appeals to the kids as well as adults.

"The Venezuela, at 58 per cent, gives a classic milk hot chocolate with sweetness and texture - the character is almonds, ripe red plums, and forest fruits. The Ecuador (70 per cent) is darker and what I call the 'flat white' of the chocolate range with a more intense flavour – floral, nuts, vanilla, spice. The bean is a variety unique to the region.

"The Madagascar at 82 per cent has the lowest sugar content, so really appeals to those who love chocolate but don't want the sweetness commonly found in hot chocolates. This has notes of red fruits and light citrus."

In a tactic used by some tea companies, Kokoa offers a special serving tray, with double-walled no-handle glasses. The wood is sustainable teak. A typical starter pack comprises of three or four display jars with the chosen varieties, point of sale, wooden serving tongs, a whisk and a set of sugar grinders.

The question of margin is an interesting one in speciality chocolate.

"While it is acknowledged that using real chocolate is more expensive, it is recouped by a higher selling price and the basic acknowledgement that the customer deserves a good experience. In Brussels and Paris it is a 'given' that coffee shops use real chocolate, not a powder - only in the UK do coffee shops serve exactly the same powder as is available at home or in a vending machine.

"As a guideline, chocolate may be £11.95 to £13.95 per kilo; milk is £1.20 for two litres. So the cost for an 8oz drink varies from 25p to 32p for the chocolate, plus approx. 12p for the milk. The 12oz drink varies from 31p to 42p for the chocolate, plus approx. 18p for the milk.

"But the RRP for an 8oz is £2.50, and for the 12oz is £3.00 or up to £3.50.

"As well as personal choice of origin and cocoa content, the customer can add flavoured sugars - rose, chilli, or orange and cinnamon. The whole experience engages the customer and adds to the perceived value, and increases the retail price."



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Why is it that so much chocolate in coffee houses is sold as a generic? Even those who make a song and dance about their coffee and their tea seem to simply dismiss the other main ingredient with the single word 'chocolate'.

You would expect chocolate marketers to get extremely agitated over this, and demand that coffee-house staff treat their brands with more respect and knowledge – but Tessa van Rensburg, director at the Irish roaster Java Republic, says that she can see the reasoning.

"Not even the specialist chocolate cafes have great descriptions or enticing tasting notes on their chocolate drinks, which is rather disappointing.

"However, one reason that chocolate is sold as generic is because the customers are already bombarded with too much advertising 'noise', and because staff are multi-tasking so much... so the less complicated a drink is, the better all round.

"As people 'buy with their eyes', the best way to promote chocolate is through good imagery coupled with a short, clever tagline. The tag that conveys the taste of The Other Bean is 'non-synthetic', and while there could be an amazing ad campaign around this, the problem for a coffee shop owner is that the message can get lost among all the point-of-sale information.

"So, we can understand that if a picture of a chocolate drink and a price point gets the job done, that seems to be enough for many café operators."

But that of course doesn't lead to getting a café singled out with a reputation for great chocolate.



The choice – to go generic or branded?



Java Republic's Other Bean, promoted with the smiling face of a small child, but still an adult chocolate

"The quirky bits of a product turn out to be what the customer remembers, and products that start off as individual, edgy and quirky tend to sell very quickly."

Being 'individual and edgy' is right up Java Republic's street, and in their usual confident style, they call their Other Bean 'the only real hot chocolate on the market' - a bold claim indeed.

"When we say that, we mean that our recipe is completely transparent - we have no additional added ingredients,

like artificial cocoa flavourings. We believe that 35-40 per cent cocoa content is a good taste profile, and that any cocoa content that is less needs to be boosted, which is probably why some of our competitors use flavouring, and then you get the synthetic after-taste.

"In any comparable tastings that we have held between our chocolate and competitors, The Other Bean wins hands-down as being natural, tasty and non-synthetic. Our trade cus-

tomers have told us that they have gone on to do further blind tastings with their own customers, and have come up with the same result.

"It is good quality coffee and quality chocolate together that deliver a great tasting mocha, and we know that our chocolate marries well with our coffees. If the milk is steamed and textured correctly, there will be no need to add sugar or cream."

Another curiosity of the Other Bean is the artwork - it features the face of a happy chocolate-drinking child, which appears to go right against the current trend for those who are trying to position hot chocolate and mocha as adult drinks.

Certainly, when Coffee House did our product sampling, we took a tub of it to our local pub, whose first reaction was, just from the packaging: 'we're not going to like this - it's going to be far too sweet, because it's for kids'. However, when they brewed it, they judged it not too sweet at all for adult use, and smooth to use. Does the child theme not do the product a disservice?

No, it does not, argues Java Republic. If you have the bravery to move beyond stocking chocolate as a 'generic', and give your house chocolate an identity, you can find that the reactions can be unexpected, but valuable.

"Different images can provoke wonderful thoughts in the consumer's mind," says Tessa van Rensburg. "Typically - 'if this chocolate is natural enough for children, it's good enough for my waistline!'"

One of the best-known American suppliers to the British trade is Michael Szyliowicz, whose Mont Blanc chocolate comes in syrup, sauce or powder formats. He is also an enthusiastic observer of how chocolate is sold in cafes around the world, and believes that a supplier has to put in some effort to produce a product which suits a café.

He speaks of offering coffee shop clients several chocolate profiles 'to better complement the character of their coffee', which is right against the concept of 'any old chocolate', bought as a generic product.

"Drinking chocolate works best when it's part of an overall beverage program," he told us. "The idea is to use chocolate to build a drink menu with hot, cold, iced, and blended beverages.

"If I were a coffee-house owner, to make sure I selected a chocolate which actually did work best with my house espresso, I would do a simple comparison among three or four, but using a mixture of powders and syrups, to see how they work in my house coffee. Testing a variety of chocolates and types, and selecting the one that best complements your roast, will be critical



for a coffee-house owner."

Recent travels have shown him new ideas.

"Chocolate's resurgence as a drink continues," says Michael. "On a recent trip to Santa Fe, I visited a small speciality chocolate shop that features an entire menu of flavoured hot chocolates.

"By combining chocolate with flavours like spicy pepper, orange,



Michael Szyliowicz – "thinking beyond the common cup". Above - simply-packed giveaway chocolate coffee beans made from a cafe's house coffee

rosemary, vanilla, and other fruit and herb combinations, they serve drinking chocolate with an interesting twist. Their rich and thick hot chocolate is an excellent treat that makes you slow down and enjoy it - it's a great change of pace, and I hope the idea catches on."

Flavoured chocolates are more common in America, and some of those relating to the historical use of choco-

late in south America just don't have any relevance in the UK - the drink Montezuma served to Cortez was very highly-spiced, and it is an interesting question as to whether chilli chocolate has a market here.

In Arizona, says Michael, he discovered a coffee shop which served either dark chocolate, or fruit (or both) beside its filter coffee, having thoughtfully 'paired' the flavours of each.

"The key to successfully selling premium drinks is thinking through the entire cup, including the last, most important visual cue - how will it be garnished?"

Slightly beyond this one, an American donut chain wanted to showcase their coffee, so they asked Mont Blanc to come up with something to inspire customer interest. Michael took the chain's own coffee beans, dipped them in chocolate, and packaged the beans in a single serving size, and the chain gave 'their own' chocolate-covered coffee beans away in-store.

The key, says Mont Blanc, is to think chocolate through - it can do a bigger job for the coffee house than many owners imagine.

"We are," remarks Michael, "thinking beyond the common cup!"

It is a very good thing to remember just why we have to consider our chocolate offer carefully, says Gary McGann of Beyond the Bean. It is because chocolate drinks sell at a high price – but we cannot justify that higher price with any old chocolate, and the consumers know that.

"If you cast your mind back seven or eight years, the drinking chocolate market was embedded in only one brand. It has moved on, maybe not far enough or fast enough, but it is changing, and we do now have large trade customers who want to get chocolate back to where it should be."

Where should it be? The target, curiously, is a mix between 'real' chocolate and the kind of taste that meets the general public preference. So, to be profitable, a chocolate drink has to be good, but not too specialist.

"The chocolate drink is sold at a higher price than the coffee drink, and in many cases that is without any reason, because the cafes are using a standard chocolate powder product," argues McGann. "There's nothing wrong with powder as such, but in a market where there is such pressure on the price of cocoa, there are people out there who are increasingly tweaking the cocoa content of their powder, downwards."

This, he points out, works against the need to justify the high price of a chocolate drink.

"But if you look at the trend in the 'third wave' coffee bars, not that I like that term, then you see they are using

Justifying the price of the drink



Beyond the Bean's flake-format chocolate

flake chocolate. Flake chocolate is a known product, in that you can use it as a chocolate drink, or a ganache (a smooth mix of chocolate and cream). There is a reasonable amount of flake chocolate on the market, but the challenge for a café is finding the one that works best, in a market which is dominated by powder.

"We have tested a lot of these, and so far we have shied away from the single-origins, because although a lot of them have pleasant and distinctive tastes, those tastes are too left-field for many people... they are 'love them or hate them' flavours.

"There is a balance between getting the taste, the mouthfeel, and the cocoa

content right, and we have now ended up with a 54 per cent cocoa content flake, which will probably be launched under the Zuma brand in September."

For the coffee-house owner, says Beyond the Bean, it is worthwhile taking the time to re-evaluate chocolate on offer from suppliers, and particularly to find out which formats work best in the framework of a particular business.

Consider the format of your chocolate, adds Beyond the Bean. "If you just don't sell enough chocolate to make it worth your while melting any, you might find chocolate sauce useful – you probably won't have caramel or white chocolate available all the time in another form, so a sauce gives you

speed on these when you need it."

And, says Beyond the Bean, it is worth considering just how widely chocolate can be used. The company actively recommends blending its Sweetbird smoothies and Zuma frappes to create new ideas - the addition of coconut flavour to a chocolate frappe takes little time, but adds an interesting choice to a menu.

Consider that menu-writing carefully, says McGann. "Menus have become easier to read in recent years – it used to be that on a coffee bar menu, 'more was more', but now you don't need to put everything on.

"The ideal is this - have your core menu, and have your seasonal, rotational drinks... but make sure those are real drinks, not just 'shove a flavour in' drinks. Then look at the success of good 'specials' menus – look how well Pizza Express have promoted their coffee and mini-desserts ('dolcetti') as a 'special', priced very sensibly at about £3.50, which makes very good incremental revenue."

Do customers want a chocolate-based flavoured special?

"More people than you think. You can go back to the 'replicate the chocolate bar' market - the milkshake bars have been doing this for years. And there is an element of success in it, because they take the bar, the vanilla, the ice-cream, blend them, and that's £3.50, thanks very much!"

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Several top coffee origins face 'traceability' problems

There have, by remarkable coincidence, been three different recent cases of the provenance of the world's most famous coffees being questioned.

Ethiopian coffees have come in for increasing criticism from speciality buyers in America over the suspicion that the African country's Commodity Exchange, which was set up to allow easier access to products, has effectively lost certain great single-origin coffees, by combining them with bulk quantities of other coffees for easier marketing. The Exchange has, it is said, improved trading conditions for farmers, but has also turned some of the world's most famous 'origin' coffees into untraceable commodities.

"This issue is an intriguing paradox," the speciality importer Steve Hurst of Mercanta told us. "On the one hand the farmers are pleased with the arrangements since they apparently get paid much quicker – on the other, traceability is a genuine problem.

"Mercanta long ago adopted the policy of selecting simply the finest Ethiopian Yirgacheffe, Sidamo, and Harrar that we could find. Part of this 'bulking' process appears to have led to more 'commodification' and so currently we do not stock any Ethiopian, despite seeing a number of samples... none were approved.

"We have told our customers the truth - we said we could not prove the traceability, and should that be a problem for them, then they should not buy these coffees.

"Mercanta has been at the forefront of traceability, but some countries are simply not suited to the neat tracing models

sought by the artisan roasting industry. Ethiopia presents the most challenging sourcing problem because this country produces many fine unique speciality coffees - however, if the farmers are happier with the present arrangements, and customers are happy with the coffees, then it seems to me everyone is a winner and we should move on... but I think we may yet see increasing debate on the issue of traceability."

Another important buyer of green beans, Simon Wakefield, agrees, and tells us that this is a big problem, and that he hears from Ethiopian exporters that they are constantly complaining about the quality of the beans they receive. "Traceability is inadequate," he adds.

In Jamaica, the director general of the Jamaican Coffee Industry Board, Chris Gentles, has begun a crack-down on counterfeiting and 'passing-off' of inferior coffees being sold as genuine Blue Mountain. His work will start inside his island, concentrating on packaged coffee offered to tourists – the vast majority of the coffee goes abroad, but he has been reported as saying that fraudulent claims of supposedly 100 per cent Blue Mountain coffee in tourist shops are 'rampant'.

In Hawaii, the local department of agriculture has forced the giant Safeway chain to re-label packs of Kona coffee sold in America, to show that the blend contains only 10 per cent Kona beans.

Starbucks has agreed to pay \$75,000 to settle a disability discrimination lawsuit brought in Texas by a barista who claimed she was fired for being a dwarf. Apparently the barista was hired, but during her training period asked to stand on a stool or small stepladder to prepare orders and serve customers. Starbucks allegedly fired her, saying that she would pose a danger to customers and employees. In the bizarre kind of statement which is so often made by corporates on these occasions, Starbucks reportedly said that it welcomed the judgment, which would 'allow it to reinforce its commitment to the fair treatment of its partners'.

Starbucks is in trouble again in China. This time, the brand has upset the descendants of an 11th-century judge by putting his image, or rather something which was not his image, on its cups. Bao Zheng is a historical figure revered for his strictness in upholding justice and opposing corruption. His 36th-generation descendant told the *China Daily* that he was 'shocked' to see his ancestor's face on the mug. "It looks really absurd! He has a foreigner's face!" he complained.

The new Six Eight Kafe of Birmingham reports a silly story which Kaldi devoutly hopes is true: a guy comes in and says "I got no



Kaldi

money, so can I use some from your staff tip jar to pay for a drink?"

Telling remark reported by the Bea's of Bloomsbury coffee shop - a chef remarked to them: "television idealises manual labour like ours".

The trend for American topless coffee drive-thrus has finally ended up in court – the Java Juggs business in Everett, Washington, which has the slogan of 'some like it hot', has been prosecuted for having female baristas put on strip shows while serving male customers. Apparently without a hint of humour, the American press reported that prosecution followed a long investigation, in which police officers had been watching the baristas for months...

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