

Boughton's

COFFEE HOUSE



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

November 2011

Cafe owners warned to take more care on takeaway lids

The coffee-house trade has again been warned to take extremely great care over the choice and the fitting of lids used on takeaway cups. Several paper cup makers have been quick to step in on a matter raised by a café operator last month, who reported that he had experienced four scalding incidents within recent weeks. In each case, he reported, the problem was not the result of any lack of care by his serving staff, but appeared to be the result of a curious phenomenon in which takeaway lids which appear secure at first fitting, then loosen.

The café owner had appealed for help to understand why his cup lids, which appeared to be fitted securely when the drink was handed to the cups, appeared to loosen after about two minutes.

Having suffered four minor scalding incidents, he asked *Coffee House* magazine: "is this a known industry problem?"

Many cup suppliers were quick to say that café operators must not put up with takeaway lids which do not fit securely.

At Printed Cups UK, sales manager Tim Jackson said: "I think the issue is that there are so many cup manufacturers out there, all producing very, very slightly different-sized cups. Therefore finding an exact lid can be tricky.

"If there is a problem with lids coming off and customers being scalded, the lid is definitely too big. A lid that clips on well to start with, but still swivels around the cup lip, is still too big. A good-fitting lid should not move at all.

"I would suggest that a lid almost needs to be 'too small' and very tight when first placed on the cup."

At the Paper Cup Company, managing director Mark Woodward said: "you cannot be too careful.

"Different manufacturers' cups do give different lid-fit, and when you move to imported cups, this can be

even more. Some lids are made from pure styrene, and these do not have much resistance to heat – the better lids are made of a mixture of plastics, and the addition of rubber to give some flexibility.

"Drinks should not be served with contents that can scald – even if you have the best lid fit in the world, the customer takes the lid off to put sugar in, or stir it, and then spills it, you will still be liable.

"A very important point is serving

temperature. My recommendation is to check serving temperatures from your national competitors, do a risk assessment, and keep a record of serving temperatures."

At Vegware, Dominic Marjoram said: "tests we have done show that steam does make lids softer; ours soften temporarily in the middle, but not at the rim, and do not lose grip.

"The important thing for operators to know is – all lids are not the same."



Glass of water or a latte art lesson? A customer tries his luck at Artisan

This is our favourite coffee-house tactic of the month, and it comes from the new Artisan café in Putney, whose owners, Magda and Edwin, spent a year working in the coffee villages of the Rwenzori Mountains in Uganda. The wheel is their variant on the loyalty-card scheme – when a customer gets eight stamps on their coffee card they can receive a free coffee or take a chance and spin our wheel. So far as we can see, while it is possible to win only a glass of tap water, the odds of a decent prize are certainly stacked fairly generously in the customer's favour.

The high-tech version of the loyalty 'card' has arrived - back page.



...see page 9 for this month's tea



Lavazza's arty calendar in its 20th year

Winter would not be the same without the appearance of the Lavazza calendar, probably the classiest in the world's entire coffee industry, and one which is a nice symbol of one-upmanship to have on your wall. This year's has an unusual theme - the brand has re-hired a dozen of the elite photographers who have created previous calendars, and asked each to take a self-portrait with a coffee theme.

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A most unusual theft has occurred at the Copper Kettle in Gainsborough – the thief took cash, food, a parrot and a cockatoo. Owner David Holmes has offered a £250 reward to anyone who gives information leading to the recovery of the birds.

The Rainforest Foundation UK will hold an online gift auction for Christmas. Two hundred gifts have been donated by such as Sting, U2, Stephen Fry, Dame Judi Dench and Emma Thompson. There are dresses from John Galiano, designer clothing and bags, signed art, show tickets and Michelin-starred dinners.



Peros has launched One Porridge, a new line of ethical products, in which sales help fund school meals in Malawi. Porridge has become a rapid growth area for coffee-houses over the past five years - it is astonishing how many to-go sites now offer it as a takeaway.

The latest town to complain of 'too many coffee shops' is Henley, where a former mayor says that the arrival of Patisserie Valerie, the ninth coffee shop in town, is taking up space that could be used by other retailers - although it is opening in a former

travel agency site which has been empty for three years. Another councillor pointed out that all the coffee shops were well patronised, and that another one would be an 'enormous improvement' on a closed-up site.

Yet another borough intends to allow a public toilet to be converted into a coffee house. Hertsmere borough council intends to convert disused facilities at the entrance to Radlett Gardens. The idea was originally mooted six years ago.

Starbucks decided to introduce its seasonal Red Cups again, fairly early - on 3rd November. The chain's new season drink is a praline mocha.

The investment press has reported that Martyn Dawes, the man who founded Coffee Nation on the idea of self-serve, gourmet coffee in service-stations and airports, is looking to return to business in the UK – although not necessarily back in the beverage trade. He is reported to be looking to acquire 'a great small business' with a view to turning it into 'a great mid-sized business'. Martyn Dawes began Coffee Nation with £300,000, and sold it for £23 million. When Whitbread bought it recently to become Costa Express, they paid over £60 million for it. He is quoted as saying that leaving Coffee Nation was such an emotional wrench, he got it out of his system with some extreme sports - including climbing Kilimanjaro.

Australia now grows its own chocolate

Two extremely unusual items have appeared in the world of chocolate.

Australia now has its own chocolate - after ten years in development, Daintree Estates chocolate was launched in the first week of November. The product is a co-operative effort between several farmers, and the result is the first Australian single-origin organic cocoa and chocolate. One of the farmers has said the launch of the product may be a surprise to some people in that country: "Many people probably feel that there is chocolate made in Australia already, but it's actually just moulded from overseas products," he said.

The chocolate is not immediately available in the UK, the brand's Tim Davies told us: "For the time being, we have only block chocolate, and are only able to distribute within Australia. We certainly do plan to export to the UK, but expect this might still be another year. As this is a new industry in Australia, we are limited by the number of cocoa trees in the ground. The other limitation is that nobody in Australia is presently making cocoa powder and it is not economical for us to ship it offshore to have powder made. We do plan to set up our own cocoa press to make cocoa butter and powder."

Elsewhere, the south-coast wholesaler Cream Supplies, which specialises in searching out unusual items of use to the café trade, has come up with a new kind of drinking chocolate. This is Raw, described as being 'a world away from the sugar-laden, processed and, often unhealthy, concoctions we have previously accepted as hot chocolate'.

The product is an organic, raw chocolate drink, ethically sourced from wholly sustainable areas, for brewing with fresh milk. The Ecuadorian cacao powder used is literally 'raw', in that it is made from unroasted beans - raw cacao is richer in antioxidants than any other food.

A sweetening ingredient is organic coconut sugar, derived from the palm rather than the coconut itself, which is described as 'adding subtle sweetness without the heady rush of white sugar. A most unusual ingredient is mesquite, a mineral-rich desert plant which tastes rather like caramel.

A curious situation has arisen over the 'Bodum Coffee and Tea Lab concept', which has appeared on a well-known website that showcases new product designs, largely from the Far East. The product, which drew many approving comments from readers, features a glass reservoir and beverage filter integrated as detachable modules - spilling is said to be impossible. When asked for details, Bodum said it was not their product; when pushed about the brand on the side, they said: 'we are aware of that, but it is not a Bodum product, and we have our legal team looking into it.' (The designer's notes for the product include the delightfully precise instruction: 'plug in the spherical gadget..!')



Fingerprint recognition from Saeco

Biometrics have appeared in the home coffee sector, with the imminent arrival of the new Philips Saeco model, which 'respond to the fingerprint of the user'. Essentially, a user can programme their drink preferences into the machine, and operate it simply by pressing their finger on to a pad - the machine recognises them and brews their preferred drink. The likely price, it is suggested, is £1,700. The well-known trainer and consultant Paul Meikle-Janney, who was invited to test it, told us 'it seems to work well'.



Christine Collins of Cup of Tea, the distributor of the Ronnefeldt tea brand, now has a new brand of her own. This is Pure Tea, a collection of organic teas described as 'suited for trendy cafés, bars, farm shops, tea rooms, who wish to take the organic approach'.



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First takeaway cheesecakes for coffee-house market

The English Cheesecake Company has launched a range of eight individually-wrapped cheesecakes for both the eat-in and takeaway market. The new products are packed in 80m wedges, and are thought to be a new takeaway concept.

"Carry-out cheesecake only exists in a mediocre 'supermarket format'," company founder Philip Weldon told *Coffee House*. "But to call that 'cheesecake' is tenuous, as it's more like a mousse, not a cake. We have created and designed our wedges to our own specification and a fantastic piece of cheesecake, as a single pre-packed slice, fills a huge void in the marketplace.

"Storage requirements are that when thawed in a fridge, they can be kept chilled for a further 4 days. We estimate a selling price would range from £1.70-£2.50 depending on the type of outlet."

For the sit-in trade, there are also



portioned full-size cheesecakes.

"For the trade, nearly all cheesecakes are 14-serving, 9in round. The price per portion could cost from 80p-£1.20, highly competitive considering these are premium products. Portions could then sell for between £2.50-£5.50."

Waste-food campaigns continue

A unique cafe has had its first birthday - the Foodcycle cafe of Stroud Green, north London, is part of the chain allied with the national charity MIND, which works with unwanted foodstuffs 'recycled' from major supermarkets. This site takes 80kg of waste food each week from stores such as Sainsbury's and Budgens.

Meanwhile, London Bio-packaging, a company already active in takeaway coffee cups, has created Doggy Boxes for the Sustainable Restaurant Association's 'Too Good To Waste' campaign.

The campaign is designed to cut the amount of food waste going to landfill by encouraging restaurants to offer 'doggy bags', a long-standing American habit in which consumers can take leftovers home with them to finish later.



The SRA says that a quarter of consumers asked said they would be too embarrassed to ask for a doggy bag, and a third had never thought to ask.



Our regular readers will know just how much we enjoy a good A-board. One day we're going to publish a collection of them! We think both of this month's examples might have come from Street Coffee, of London.





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Pumpkin, the chain of coffee-shops which can be found on many railway stations, has apologised to a mother who organised a parents' sit-in at Bedford station today after staff asked her to leave for breastfeeding her baby. She said: "the staff didn't seem to realise that it was a feeding issue and not a decency issue." A spokesman for Pumpkin said: "we do most certainly actively welcome breast feeding mothers and their babies into our outlets. Unfortunately one of our team members did not respond with the sensitivity with which we expect our customers to be treated."

Cafedirect has appointed a new advertising agency, and says that it will now develop a long-term strategy for the brand to showcase the high-quality taste of its products. Asked if this meant that previous advertising had gone too far on the ethical theme, and too little on the taste, Cafedirect's Jacquie Bance told us: "the ethical message won't drop out of our communications, but we do need to focus on what we are delivering to consumers, and we know they want to hear more about our taste."

Following their acquisition of the Coffee#1 chain, the Welsh brewer SA Brain has told us that the two businesses are to be run separately, and will not clash with the use of Costa coffee in the brewery's own chain of pubs. "We have developed our coffee offers in pubs in partnership with the Costa team and are keen to maintain that relationship," said retail director Philip Lay. "The Coffee #1 business is being run separately, and we have no plans to cross-sell or merge the two very different coffee offers that we now operate. They are very different and work extremely well in the environments where we deliver them." James Shapland, who ran the Coffee#1 chain, is working as a consultant, planning the next Coffee#1, to open in Exeter early next year.

A company called Savortex has introduced the 'world's most energy-efficient and sustainable washroom hand dryer'. It promotes a ten-second drying time, but the curious feature of it is that users can apparently vary the temperature by moving their hands. The maker claims energy reduction against other driers of 'up to 94 per cent'.

The 'occupy' protests which have recently spread across the world have had a curious result for a coffee-cart owner in San Diego, California. After the city's main concourse had been occupied by protesters for a week, the operator protested in turn to the local authority that she had lost 70 per cent of her usual business, because her usual customers were intimidated by the 'occupation'. The city chiefs decided to suspend her rent until the situation returned to normal, and also to give her a rent credit equal to the cost of professionally cleaning her cart, after

protesters urinated on it.

The franchised mobile coffee chain Cafe2U, which has been operating in the UK for several years now, is to open in America. The new operator there has said that he intends to open up franchises running a thousand vans in five years.

The Teapigs company, the irreverent distributor which has pioneered pyramid teabags, had its fifth birthday in early November.

Councillors in Bristol have said that they will serve an enforcement notice on a Costa franchisee who has allegedly opened up without change-of-use permission, requiring the business in Whiteladies Road to be restored to its previous state. It opened recently in place of a newsagent, and as we reported last month, 3,000 people signed a petition claiming the cafe would 'undermine the viability of independent shops'. A local association said that 'the big multiples are breaking the rules and making the game unfair'.

The Taste of the West Café/Tea Room of the Year award has been awarded to the Kitchen Tearoom in Polperro, Cornwall. It beat 22 other entrants.

The KFC fast-food chain is launching a campaign to promote its espresso coffee, a move which the ad industry says is an attempt to emulate McDonalds products, the brand which claims to be the UK's biggest seller of coffee. The outdoor advertising will begin in the Tyne-Tees region, and will promote KFC's use of Lavazza coffee. Jennelle Tilling, KFC's marketing vice-president, told us: "We have sold freshly-ground Lavazza coffee in many of our restaurants since 2009, and this is an example of a quality KFC product that consumers might not be aware of. Given that more and more consumers appreciate good coffee, it makes sense to communicate that now."

The coffee trade is used to legal arguments over branding, often when an operator has deliberately come too close to a Starbucks logo, but the latest case has surprised many people. In Germany, an operator opened her Apfelkind (Applechild) café in a suburb of Bonn, and designed a logo that would appeal to children - a red apple and a child in a hat. To her surprise, she has received a threat from the big computer company, claiming that her work 'could confuse Apple customers'. The café owner has said she will fight the case. The Apple computer company is reported to have been so protective of its name that it once took action against the New York authorities over the city's historic nickname, 'the big apple'.

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The Starbucks franchise at Jersey Airport is to be replaced by a local café - the replacement will be supplied by the local roaster Cooper and Co. The airport director said that the new situation will 'better match the needs and expectations of our customers'. A local operator will also be taking over a Starbucks site in Leeds - in an interesting turn of phrase, a local businessman has said he will reopen the Starbucks venue in Otley Road as 'a high-end boutique coffee shop', possibly to be called Macy's. The local paper reports a difference of opinion over Starbucks' departure - the brand is quoted as saying that the lease had run out, but the property agent is reported as saying: "in the current economic climate we are more than happy to negotiate on rent, but Starbucks wanted to halve it." In the midlands, Amadeus has been chosen to open a new coffee shop in Coventry Cathedral, and reportedly beat Starbucks to the position.

Further to news in recent issues concerning ethical doubts over the use of kopi luwak coffee, the international press has been looking at the subject, and recently featured a farmer in Manila who has turned to the product, but not in the factory-farming way - he gathers the beans which have been excreted on the forest floor. He said that he and his wife can collect eight kilos a day of beans in a good day, making \$230 - in a country where a quarter of the population live on a dollar a day. When the coffee trees are not in cherry, the palm civets switch to eating wild fruits, and that farmer's income plunges.

The local company Bote Central has reportedly promised to protect the civets against a growing culture of factory-farming, and says it can still export three tonnes of the coffee a year. It is estimated that 80 percent of civet coffee in the Philippines is now produced using caged animals.

A news report says that a 'special adviser' to the Ivory Coast's prime minister has forecast that the country will have total cocoa production of 1.6 million tonnes during the 2011-2012

season. This, it is believed, will be a record. However, there are some curious aspects to the story - farmers are said to be complaining about the prices they are getting, worried that they cannot afford fertiliser, and that many elderly trees are coming to the end of their productive life. One commentator has also said that commodity-producing countries tend to 'talk down' their crop size expectations, in the hope of pushing prices up. Forecasting a record-busting crop just one month into a 12-month season, said one writer, appears to be 'a blunder of the first order', and will depress international prices.

Kaffeine, the highly-regarded London coffee-house, has won a corporate client. It will service the UK office of Lend Lease, an Australian construction company that employs over 17,000 people worldwide. Kaffeine will run the internal café under the name One Tree Coffee.

Darjeeling tea has been given Protected Geographical Indication status by the European Union, the seventh non-EU product to be given the status. The EU has said that for tea companies who blend the real thing with non-Darjeeling tea, there will be a five-year transitional period during which the name can continue to be used.

According to the Los Angeles Times, the biggest drink in cafes and restaurants in the area is now - tap water. The paper reports that revenue-generating drinks have dropped by 2.7 billion servings over the last five years - and there have been 2.7 billion more requests for tap water.

The Laynes espresso bar in Leeds has begun 'espresso blend deconstruction' evenings for those of its customers who want to know more about their coffee. Dave Olejnik of Laynes has taken on the Red Brick blend from Square Mile of London, and has decided to present each of the coffees that go into the blend for customers to taste individually, before they taste them again as the complete blend. The evenings cost £14.00, for which participants also get a take-home bag of Red Brick.



Cafitalia's all-pod espresso machine

One of the most unusual coffee machines to appear in the espresso trade has now completed a year's trial in the pub sector.

It is the new Cafitalia machine, distributed by Soner Yilmaz, and it is a four-group pod machine designed for simplicity and speed of delivery - there is no portafilter, but the pods are inserted and removed by hand from a slot above the pouring spout.

"We discovered that although pods are thought to be a good idea, those who have converted traditional espresso machines have not found the result ideal," Soner Yilmaz told *Coffee House*.

"We have come up with the first commercial machine of its type to work solely with pods - it is the size of a compact two-group traditional machine, and simple. After a year's trials, we have had one service call, and

even that was down to an over-zealous operator.

"We shall probably add a version two, with a second steam arm or perhaps an auto-frother, and a lower tray for taller cups."

The Cafitalia has been used in some M&B pubs for a year.

"We had three levels of reaction. The staff, who are important, became quickly committed to the pod concept. The brand managers liked it... the headquarters bean counters needed a little more convincing!

"It hasn't gone anywhere else yet. We wanted a trading history before we let it out, and now we have one."

The cost is around £3,700.



Here's a puzzle which occupies many tea-rooms - how to serve a flowering tea to best visual effect? This answer came from Tea Monkey of Milton Keynes, which took a prize in the recent BSA awards. The answer is a cafetiere - but not used in the normal way, because of course the mesh filter would destroy the flowering tea.

Tea Monkey has a branch in Bath opening at the end of November.

Trade annoyed at cup report

The takeaway coffee trade has been extremely exasperated by a recent report appearing in *Which?*, the consumer-choice magazine.

The report carries a big picture showing top-brand takeaway cups, and claims that two and half billion such paper cups are used every year, but are not recycled. It has effectively criticised the coffee trade's work on the recovery and recycling of takeaway beverage cups, saying that customers are 'confused' about what to do with coffee cups', and complaining that the café trade 'does not go far enough' on the waste issue.

The coffee trade has retorted that the *Which?* report is superficial, and appears to try and lay the blame for the country's landfill and recycling problems on the coffee industry, without taking account of any of the work done on this problem in recent years.



Starbucks has regularly held international summits on the subject, even inviting its competitors to take part. Incredibly, the magazine appears not to have consulted the Paper Cup Recycling Group.

A typical response came from Martin Kersh of the Foodservice Packaging Association: "We have 398 local authorities in this country,

all doing different things with regard to waste recovery and recycling, and you can hardly blame the trade for that. By using pictures of coffee cups with the big names on, they are blaming the packaging for this... we are part of the solution which brings the consumer all the benefit of takeaway food products, and we get blamed for it!"



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Two new training 'apps'

Paul Meikle-Janney of Coffee Community, one the longest-established barista trainers in the British trade, has launched a training 'app' which can be used on i-phones and i-pads. It is already on sale at £2.99, or £4.99 for the larger-screen version.

It is called 'Coffee: Beans, Barista and Latte Art', and includes pictures of coffee growing at origin through to detailed shots of the coffee-making process. An interactive map guides the user through coffee flavours around the world and the training menu shows in detail how drinks are constructed, with videos on setting a grinder, making espresso and cappuccino, foaming and texturing, and pouring three latte art designs.

"It's more 'complete' than anything out there at the moment, in its pictures and detail," says Paul Meikle-Janney. "In the training sessions, you go through a 'blackboard', which is a step-by-step sketch of what you are doing, but you can tap the screen and get a live picture of the process or a full video, full speed or slow motion.

"We have picked what we think is a fair price, and many of us can remem-



ber back to the old American training videos and DVDs, which just a few years ago were priced at sixty dollars or so! Our own Coffee Community training CD several years ago was only £10, and we did thirty thousand of them."

Franke, the coffee machine company which is celebrating its centenary this year, has also devised its own i-phone 'app', Coffee Ideas by Franke. It promises some 'unparalleled recipe ideas' for working with coffee.

New bottled water for Africa

A new bottled water, which raises funds for clean water in a coffee-growing nation, has appeared in one of the country's top coffee shops and is now on offer to others. The brand has some very unusual aspects, not least that each bottle carries a code, with which a customer can find out details of the water project they have helped, right down to a photo of the individual they have just helped.

Water4Ethiopia, a concept developed by Andy McAllister, has already appeared in Dose espresso business of London, where operator James Phillips already puts a percentage of each coffee sold to the Coffee Kids charity.

The new brand has been developed not by a professional water company, but by the founder and thirteen volunteers, who do not take any income from the project. It has operated for five weeks, and is currently on sale at a dozen outlets, in London, Cheltenham, Newark and Birmingham.

The proposition is that 25p from the sale of each bottle goes directly to work with water-producing non-government agencies in Ethiopian communities, where the locals work with the agencies to create their water supplies. The new brand says that the 25p from each bottle can effectively fund water for one recipient for a year.

Andy McAllister did voluntary work in Ethiopia in 2008, and developed the project after seeing the difficulties that



villagers had in finding clean water.

"There are of course other brands labelling themselves as charity water," said Andy McAllister. "Some give 1.5p per bottle to charity, but those charities have high overhead costs and only aim for a certain percentage of donations to reach the country being helped. Some brands are hiding behind the labelling of 'charity water' and making a lot of money for themselves in wages.

"The reality of Water4Ethiopia is that we give 25 times more per bottle to the third world than others do, and we are incredibly proud to be volunteer-run."

The actual water is from the Berrington Water spring in Herefordshire.

The Paper Cup Company has produced its own kind of takeaway carrying tray, which the company says take up less storage space, can be split to take four cups or two, and are easier to overprint for branding. The carry trays are made from fine-fluted corrugated paperboard or unbleached kraft-based carton board sourced from managed forests, hold a range of cup sizes from 8oz-20oz, including PET smoothie cups, and have a storage area in the middle for straws, sugar sticks and drink stirrers. Sample packs for the trade are now available.



Clipper Tea is launching a new 'boutique' range featuring a single estate Assam tea and a single estate Darjeeling.

The 6/8 coffee shop in Birmingham has invited a collection of illustrators, graphic designers and photographers to contribute work which will be printed on stickers that are added to its takeaway cups. The coffee house says that customers get a little piece of art with every drink, and the artists get their work to a new audience. Artists who would like to be involved are invited to get in touch.

Dawn Foods says that the chocolate brownie is the UK's favourite café-style snack - 28.6 per cent of those surveyed voted for it, with the chocolate chip cookie scoring 19 per cent and the chocolate muffin coming a surprisingly low third at 14 per cent.

Starbucks has surprised the financial press in the USA by moving into the 'micro-lending' trend. In this idea, community-based lending institutions collate many micro-donations of \$25 into loans for entrepreneurs in emerging markets. From November, over 7,000 Starbucks sites in America will collect micro-donations as small as \$5, which will then be re-packaged into larger loans for local businesses. According to Starbucks, every \$3,000 raised through customers will create one new job in America.

In the 'Wales - the True Taste' awards, the Old Stables tea room of Hay on Wye took the gold prize, with Caffi Florence of the Loggerheads

Country Park coming second and the Hive of Aberaeron third. The Old Stables is run by Mark Carnell of Chef on the Run Foods, and the day after he won the Welsh award, he won a 'commended' award in the Flavours of Herefordshire contest. A curiosity of Hay on Wye is that while it lies on the Welsh side of the border, the Royal Mail considers it to be in Hereford, thus allowing Carnell to qualify for awards in both countries!

In Cheltenham, an application has been submitted to turn a former toy shop into a 'small family-run coffee shop'. The applicant also runs the local Anderson's Coffee House, and the local press has observed that while Costa is believed to have shown interest in opening in the area, which is known for its independent traders, other local independents have wished the applicant success.

Krispy Kreme has signed a new development agreement with its UK franchisee which will involve another 35 sites here over the next six years.

Caffè Nero has launched a Gift Cards programme. Consumers can buy the cards in stores, online, or through WH Smith and Sainsburys, and values from £10-£100 are available.

Boston Tea Party in Barnstaple has held its first 'jelly' event. This is an American idea, in which people who work in isolation, freelancers and home workers and the like, come together in a coffee house to spend timewith others in the same situation.

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GAGGIA

Typhoo has modestly described its new eco-friendly packaging as 'the biggest innovation in tea since the introduction of round teabags'. It is a foil pouch refill pack aimed at home consumers who decant teabags from the packaging into another container. Although recent market reports suggest Typhoo sales volumes have dropped, the brand's head says that there have been recent improvements to the blend 'to deliver a fuller flavour', and that in blind taste tests, 48 per cent of those tasting it preferred Typhoo to other leading brands.

A Yorkshire café owner has appeared before court accused of 'flashing' three women as part of their job interviews.

Cafedirect has been working on a food-and-coffee matching project, largely promoted through Facebook. The brand invited cooks to an event where they were challenged to make a dessert to match a single-origin coffee. The winners created spicy vanilla and honey cakes, to match to the Mayan Palenque coffee. Typical other entries were 'zesty apple pastries' to go with Cafedirect's Kilimanjaro coffee.

The Small Batch Coffee Company has opened an in-house concession within the My Hotel in Brighton. A novel feature of the bar is the counter of pre-cast concrete, sitting on reclaimed Victorian Staffordshire bricks. The site also promises a filter brew-bar and a micro-roastery, using a one-kilo Topper. The company is also considering opening in St Ives, Cornwall.

Costa Coffee is reported to be planning to open 75 drive-thru outlets; the chain has not responded to requests for details.

The owner of the Top Nosh café in Batley was inconvenienced by a curious theft which delayed his opening one day last month. Someone stole the handle to his front door!

Several young entrepreneurs from East Anglia were honoured last month for the success they have had after working with the Prince's Trust - and one of them, featured on local TV, was Hayley Draper of the Window, promoted as the smallest coffee house in Britain.

Barbara Croce of Coffee Latino, the company which makes mobile coffee carts, and which works closely with the Fracino espresso machine brand, has been shortlisted for three local awards - Best North East Small Business, Best North East Retail Business, and North East Woman Entrepreneur of the Year. This year Coffee Latino has also exported vans to Iceland, Denmark, Germany, the US, Australia and Switzerland.

Starbucks has puzzled several international commentators with the news that it would introduce Blonde, its lightest roast - the brand is of course known for its dark roasts,

which have prompted some critics to say the chain's coffee tastes burned. It now turns out that the light roast has nothing to do with the chain's espresso drinks, but is a filter offer. It launches in the US in January, and has no plans yet for a UK launch.

The Hawaii Coffee Association says that local farmers are 'finally coming to grips with the true impact' of the coffee-borer problem there. The association president has called the problem 'an epidemic', and estimates suggest that a quarter of the crop might be lost to the beetle, although the true effect will not be known until the end of the growing season in February. There have been large meetings of farmers, to discuss how to combat the pest. The president has said that 90 per cent of all coffee farms in Kona have some level of infestation, but has also said that if all the farmers work together, they should be able to get back to normal within a year or so.

There has been an application to build 'Scotland's first double drive-thru coffee experience' in, of all places, a derelict petrol station in Barrhead, Glasgow. The venture is the idea of two brothers, and is intended to open under the name Coffeze.

A coffee cart has won an unusual award - the Yorkshire-based La Maison Du Cafe has won 'Outdoor Caterer of the Year' in the annual racecourse awards. The company was set up in 2005 by Tom Hawkins, and operates in racecourses from York to Cheltenham.

Beyond the Bean, the specialist wholesaler of coffee-shop items and operator of the Sweetbird and Zuma brands, has celebrated its 15th year in business by opening an office in Los Angeles. The company, which launched as Espresso Essentials, has been selling in America for two years, and says that more American distributors are now looking for products which are free from various 'nasties'. Beyond the Bean's products are generally approved by the Vegetarian and Vegan authorities, and a Sweetbird Smoothie recently won a 'best new product' award in America.

Starbucks is reported to be hiring an agency to increase its 'customer relationship management' work, and has reportedly sent briefs directly to potential applicants. It is said that Starbucks wishes to concentrate on its Starbucks Card loyalty scheme, following 'increased competition in loyalty-management from its rivals'.

A shop with a history in Corstorphine, Edinburgh, is the subject of an application for a new coffee house and chocolate shop, under the name of Bon. Five years ago, the shop was the site of a sit-in by tenants who had disagreed with the landlady over alterations that had made.

Hours of free wi-fi

The Boston Tea Party chain of the south-west received an interesting review in one of the region's local papers last month. The newspaper reported the reviewer having achieved 'a whole day' of free wi-fi, with two meals, for 'just £13.40'. At a time when many cafes are complaining about the number of laptop users who take up table space for hours and buy only one coffee, we asked the company's founder Sam Roberts whether this review was not just opening his doors for unprofitable business.

"We took the decision to provide free wi-fi as, in our opinion, charging models will soon be obsolete," he replied. "While there will always be the odd case when people take advantage of our generosity, the vast majority of our customer base recognise it as free added value to the Boston Tea Party experience, and treat the facility with respect."

The same newspaper review also said that 'experience has taught me that the coffee here can be very strong, so I always ask for a weak one'. What, we asked Sam Roberts,

does a café do when a customer asks for 'a weak latte'?

"We run two main coffees, a medium roast and a dark roast, and our customers should be asked when they order, which they prefer. The medium roast offers lighter caramel sweet toffee notes, whilst the dark roast offers liquorice/dark chocolate notes and packs a bit more of a punch.

"If a customer asks for weak coffee they would normally be offered the medium roast, and if this is too much, a one-shot medium roast."

More dual-businesses start up

The latest example of a joint business involving a coffee shop and something else is in Okehampton, where the new Toast business is a combined cafe and cooking-equipment shop.

"Our idea is to allow people to enjoy a fantastic coffee or tea served in, and on, items that we then sell in the cook-shop," the owner, Hilary Farrington told us. "As a cook myself, I have sometimes been frustrated not to find items for my kitchen more locally and that gave us the inspiration to put the two together." An interesting aspect is that the business is selling KeepCups, the reusable coffee mugs, in aid of funds for the local Air Ambulance.

In Clifton, Bristol, there is to be a business which promises 'to combine two traditionally English pastimes, afternoon tea and sewing'. Cordial & Grace is to be a modern tea rooms and sewing café, with sewing machines for customers to use, and sewing clubs to be held on the premises.

In Rossendale, Lancs, a shopkeeper wishes to convert the disused library and former council offices into a combined tea room and clothes/handbags shop. The planning agent has said that they are looking to recreate the standard of Bettys tea rooms in Yorkshire, and of the Chocolate Café in Ramsbottom, both of which draw visitors into their towns.

That Ramsbottom café has just won another award - it was named 'best coffee shop' in the Manchester Food & Drink Awards. The BBC's Olive magazine has also just called Ramsbottom 'the 7th best place for foodies in the UK'. Chocolatier Paul Morris is said to be considering the new idea of an 'interactive chocolate themed visitor attraction'.

Delice de France aims at coffee shops

Delice de France has launched a new range which it says is 'to support coffee shops and foodservice outlets that are hoping to capitalise on the growing café culture'. The range is Café Delice, and includes a raft of support packages that will help food service outlets maximise opportunities for sales of baked products and snacks. A guide featuring 200 products designed to 'optimise the café culture opportunity', has been launched and while the brand does not say anything new about the coffee-house phenomenon, there are some interesting new bakery products - typically, the Toblerone chocolate pastry

The professor who invented Le Whif, the coffee inhaler, has now come up with a caffeine shot which is sprayed directly into the mouth - AeroShot Pure Energy is the size of a lipstick, and delivers a fine powder containing vitamin B and 100 mg of caffeine that dissolves instantly in the mouth.



Lord's cricket ground is the latest to take up the afternoon tea market - having introduced the idea this summer, the venue will now extend it into next year, and is selling Lord's tea vouchers as Christmas gifts. A tour of the 'home of cricket' is included in the price - just £76.



Here is a lovely story for those who like coincidences.

We have reported before on the musical Cappuccino Girls, which is just coming to the end of a seven-week run in south Wales, and is now the longest running musical outside the West End. Readers may recall that the male star of the show is a would-be champion barista, Nasciemento. And who was the runner-up in the international in-house barista championship run by Costa last month? A barista called Nasciemento, who works in the Riverside branch in Northampton. Yes, the author of the show was interested in the promotional possibilities of that, too!

An Ayr barista has won the 'best speciality drink' prize at Costa's international in-house barista contest. His 'Cranachan Affogato' was a blend of vanilla ice cream, toasted oatmeal, honey, raspberry coulis, raspberry syrup and a shot of espresso.

More council problems over the 'retail mix' question

There has been another row over coffee houses which allegedly contravene council rules on 'retail mix'. In Pendle, Lancashire, the Tea Time café has been told to close, because the new business takes the number of non-retail outlets on the stretch over the council's preferred level of 25 per cent.

The decision comes in spite of earlier approval by parish councillors of a change of use from a travel agency to a café. The chairman of the earlier committee has said: "In difficult economic times, any business that is willing to try something new and innovative should be encouraged, especially as we are putting effort into encouraging visitors to the village and persuading people to shop local."

Dozens of people had signed a petition in favour of the change, and councillors had commended the café owner on her entrepreneurial flair, the occupation of a previously empty unit, and for creating jobs.

Among the many critical comments to the local press from local residents was one which the coffee trade will applaud. It said: 'cafes help keep high streets alive'.

In Walthamstow, an application to convert a former fabrics shop into a café has been turned down over concerns about the impact on neighbours of a plan to use the rear of the building as an outdoor smoking and seating area.

A local media comment said: "it beggars belief that the council would turn down an opportunity that might actually be a plus to the local community rather than a betting office or a money-lender."

Fraudsters in Facebook coffee scam

There has been an odd coffee-based scam in America recently. A Facebook page was set up, inviting consumers to register it as one they 'liked', and offering a \$25 gift card redeemable at the Tim Hortons chain. Users were asked to provide certain sensitive personal information. This was followed by a similar Starbucks offer. It was quickly noticed that the offers, which purported to celebrate the chains' anniversaries, actually carried wildly-inaccurate information - however, thousands of people shared the pages before they were removed by Facebook. A warning was issued that free voucher offers have become a standard tactic for fraudsters trying to find personal information.



A community-owned coffee-house and tea-room in a not-quite disused railway building has picked up its third award in a year, and Network Rail has said that the business is a blueprint for what should be done with disused offices and signal boxes throughout Britain. Bistro@the Station, Etchingham on the Hastings-London line, is leased by a community group from Network Rail and Southeastern. It began as an early-morning coffee stop for commuters, and has turned into a focus point in a village that has no pub or similar venue. Last month Bistro@the Station was honoured in the 'rural enterprise' category of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England's awards. They use Mokarabia coffee beans and a La Cimbali espresso machine.

In Scotland, there has been an application to open a 'quality coffee house' on the station platform at Inverurie. The plans to adapt what is known as 'Lord Kintore's waiting room' have taken four years, as the station is a listed building. The new coffee house, which may open in January, will probably be called Coco Works, a reference to the loco works which were once a major feature of the town.

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One of the biggest problems facing any successful coffee-house business is growth. In the history of the recent coffee boom, entrepreneurs have responded to the challenge of growth in different ways - some have grabbed every possible opportunity for it, and have gone under, swamped by their own ambition. Some have simply avoided the potential and preferred to stay small. Some have taken the money and run, leaving a purchaser to worry about the growth question.

In fourteen years, Caffe Nero has achieved a remarkable amount of growth. What is notable is that it has done so without any posturing or shouting, has come through as one of the Big Three, and is now expanding equally happily overseas.

One of Caffe Nero's most notable distinctions is that it predates Starbucks on the British high street. Gerry Ford founded it in 1997, took the company to the stock market in 2001, and in early 2007, bought it back.

It was said at the time that 'Gerry just didn't like the corporate life'. So why did he float it in the first place?

"We had a private equity group which was helpful and accommodating. At that point they owned the majority of the company, and they said 'if you want further funding, you'll have to look wider, but we're not going to make you sell the whole company'.

"What the public market then did for us was three things - gave money to let us grow, gave our venture capitalists an exit route, although they only sold down, not entirely out, and gave us greater visibility."

With well over 500 stores, does Caffe Nero now count as a 'corporate' business?

"We aren't a big corporate entity," says Gerry Ford firmly. "We are family - most of the people who work here, and some of them for nearly fifteen years, know the company as 'their' company. One of the reasons we took it back is that we didn't want to lose that. That remains the case, and it differentiates us from massive corporates."

But all the big chains protest that they are 'one big family'.

"Mmm... how do you cope with both growing, and keeping the standard of quality of a small company?" offers Gerry Ford. "It is a difficult thing. Management edicts from abroad can have nothing to do with local beliefs!

"Most of our managers and area managers, who take care of ten or twelve stores, started as baristas, and care about the brand. Most of us have worked instore, and that gives you a different way of looking at the company overall. The big deal for us is that if our people grow up with the company, they don't feel like they work for 'someone else'. This is a totally different mentality to being 'staff' for a corporate.

"Working instore gives you a greater insight into what you do. Every person in head office, if they didn't come here from a store, has to go out and do a week's training in one. Everyone from HQ goes to the barista contest. Our head office people are friends with those in the field, and we have a lot of long-established relationships.

"As a result, the 'esprit de Nero' is of people who know that they are doing something exceptional. We have always said, we all live and die by this together, and that attitude gives a pride which you don't see in other organisations."

Really?

"Here's an example," returns Gerry Ford. "Every new manager, even if they started with us as a barista, has to come to London for a day at the roastery, and then a day walking round getting to know the people here. Then they spend time with the board - this does more than put names to faces, because they come to feel that senior management supports them. They are allowed to ask us anything about the

Keeping the bond with the customer

The Caffe Nero chain is the largest of the UK's coffee-house brands to retain a non-corporate attitude... and its founder intends to keep it that way



... with Gerry Ford, founder of Caffe Nero

business, and the result is that everybody way out there knows the top management.

"This is an extremely powerful asset for us, and I know of no corporate that does anything like it."

The problem is, of course, that growth can stretch a family apart.

"So, how do we keep the spirit alive? This is a question for us to grab, we wrestle with it every day, and to be honest, we don't always get it right.

"One consideration is not to grow too fast, because if you do too many new stores, you won't keep up with the time which is needed to nurture staff. Of course, if you do nurture your people, you find that you can draw on a greater base of your own resources.

"So then you wrestle with 'how much is too much?' We find that we can cope with forty or so new openings a year in the UK. Economically, we could do 100-150, but the pace of forty seems about right.

"If you nurture enough to have long-term people working with you, you will keep your standards high,

because those people will keep the ethics going. So the right pace to grow is the pace that you feel will keep your standards."

However good Caffe Nero's internal communication is, there is the suggestion that their communication with customers is slow. On the high street, Costa is probably the quickest to regularly change its windows and A-boards, and Starbucks may be quicker than Caffe Nero. Does Gerry feel he has work to do on this?

"Strategically, Starbucks has a powerful iconic brand that they can throw money at. Whitbread has more funds for Costa than we do for our campaigns. But we are more nimble, and we reach the customer by our people reaching out."

How?

"If Costa does do its external communication well, can we do ours better? They have certainly got their voice out, and have got attention. They have been quicker than we have.

"Costa has used an approach which is loud, bold and in-your-face - they have pushed the 'best brand, best coffee' so much that people are going to believe it... and of course people are going to say they're the most familiar brand - they have the most stores!

"Those loud, bellowing campaigns may be effective, but they're not for us, even though the effect of 'we're better than Starbucks' probably does spill over on to us.

"We have never seen that as the character of our brand, and we don't have the money for it. So, have we missed a trick? Maybe, and maybe we have to figure out how to get more visibility... but we'll do it our own way, without losing the character of our brand."

That character, says Gerry Ford, is perceptibly different from the other Big Two.

"We set out to create a 'neighbourhood gathering spot', we will not go away from that, and do I feel we do it better than our competitors? I do!

"We have made the coffee house less formulaic. We offer more of a sense of walking into a neighbourhood situation than the opposition do.

"Our ethos is that our staff have a positive effect on people's lives. We don't believe every store has to look the same, we do believe that managers should put their own personality into a store, and I can tell you that they don't see Caffe Nero as 'Gerry's brand', they see it as 'our brand'. When managers talk to the board, they refer to 'my store', and in return, we refer to 'your store'. Emotionally, this is a very good thing.

"We must always be important to a neighbourhood. It's interesting that Starbucks and Costa say they want to be more local, and I think: 'so how are you going to do that with 18,000 stores?!'"

It is, however, probably a fair observation that Caffe Nero does not move so fast on trends and fashions as the others. The company stood aloof from the rush to serve the flat white, and while others are crowding

towards i-phone apps to force customer loyalty, and hiring 'customer relationship managers', Caffe Nero has simply devised a gift card, and sticks to paper loyalty cards. The reason, says Gerry Ford, is again down to character.

"The interesting thing about a paper loyalty card is that it wants nothing from you - it only wants to give you a free coffee. Its simple, rudimentary character, works. And we have been in the top ten of the country's paper cards three years in a row!"

In contrast with the much-touted 'My Starbucks Idea' worldwide suggestion scheme, Caffe Nero has a relatively simple customer panel. This too works, and in the right manner, says Gerry Ford.

"The customer panel gives access to those who are fans of ours, and who therefore feel they have the right to be heard. They are willing to give opinions because they care - and that is very different from signing up any old panel.

"Because they care, they can be quite brutal. It's quite amusing - they can take two paragraphs over telling me that I'm a moron, but then they still say that they won't go anywhere else!

"Yes, we are seen as being behind the techno-

is still the provinces.

"This is a very good time for coffee in the provincial high street. The price point is quite acceptable to the public, and we can do very well in towns of 20,000 people.

"We are certainly more people-friendly than pubs. This really is 'café society', in that it serves all those kinds of people who prefer to go to cafes than pubs. And yes, managers still do prefer working for us than working in pubs - I have had several managers who say that working for Caffe Nero has positively transformed their lives, coming out of the alcohol sector."

But of course provincial councils constantly moan about 'too many chain coffee shops' in their high streets.

"We often come up against the situation where a council says 'we don't want another group in here, they're detrimental to our area'. And yet we have still not lost a battle with a council!

"Often, when we ask the local townspeople, do you want us here - and by 'us', I mean only Caffe Nero - they have overwhelmingly said 'yes', and they have said so to a degree that has made



"We set out to create a 'neighbourhood gathering spot', we will not go away from that, and do I feel we do it better than our competitors? I do!"

logical curve on this, and yes, we know we have to understand whether our customers will want to pay in different ways, and so on... and we are certainly looking at all this, and we are anticipating change, even if we are not leading from the front.

"But one of the most valuable things we have learned from all this is that our brand has an emotional appeal. Our paper loyalty card means 'Nero doesn't want anything from me in return'. Our panel is a choice for them to participate if they want to, not because we are another noise invading their privacy.

"This gives us real weight, and we think it does far more good for us than blitzing the customers with endless e-mails. To do that would be to ruin the bond between our brand and our customer... and we must not harm than bond."

In a conversation some years back, Gerry told us, in effect, that the provinces would be the site of the major contests for the coffee-house sector from now on. Someone else in the trade recently said that he didn't think Central London, now full of cafes, figures at all in the plans of the top three any more.

"There is still room in Central London," counters Gerry Ford. "We do probably five new sites there a year. It isn't saturated, but the biggest potential

councils back down. We have overwhelming petitions saying Nero is the best thing in the high street!

"The impression the councils give is that we're sucking something away from their high street, rather than bringing something to it. For some brands, that may be true, but where we have become established, I have never heard it said that we detract from the high street, only that we add to it.

"So, when the complaints now come up, we very often find there is another agenda in there... and it may be that a councillor owns a café or a pub!"

Such competition, says Gerry Ford, is welcome, so long as it is fair and of high standard.

"My reaction to this is always: if you have a good local café, you will hold your own against us, and I will applaud you. If you deserve to win, good luck to you. But if you have been getting by simply because there was nothing better, then our attitude is - 'move over' !

"It is interesting that when the question has been put to the community, we have never lost. We have had property agents crowing about Nero coming to their high street, because the value of property there goes up!"

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It is now several years since the concept of grind-on-demand was introduced, and although the principle is now established, its use throughout the trade is still far from commonplace.

The difference is this – a traditional 'doser-grinder' will grind coffee every so often and hold individual doses in little plastic buckets, which are emptied into the portafilter when the barista pulls a plastic paddle back and forth.

With a grind-on-demand machine, the beans are not ground until seconds before the drink is brewed, thus preserving the freshness of the coffee for as long as possible. The fine-ness of the grind is adjusted in extremely small increments, and the amount dispensed into the portafilter can be set to fractions of a gramme, and fractions of a second.

The popularity of grind-on-demand has gained pace rapidly - many coffee shops will now use nothing else, and Fracino, which is more known for its British-made espresso machines, says it has tripled its work in on-demand grinders over the last five years. The brand puts the increase down to a greater desire for freshness, avoiding ground coffee waiting in the doser-grinder's dispensing chamber, getting more stale all the time.

Is that 'stale-ness' noticeable? Does it really make a difference? Yes, says Matt Tuffee of La Cimbali.

"In times of lull, everyone has a doser-grinder sitting full of ground coffee...

and that doesn't get thrown away, it gets used sooner or later! Who will notice? Well, the deterioration is fast - leave a slice of fresh bread on a chopping board for five minutes, and you know it is beginning to oxidize. You notice that, and coffee's the same, although the consumer may not think of it as freshness - the consumer may simply think 'it's not what it should be...'"

Is grind-on-demand a 'trend'? "Yes," says Marco Olmi of the Coffee Machine Company, "but it's a trend which is quality-driven, so it's a trend with some meaning behind it."

How does a café operator assess whether a grind-on-demand is the right thing to choose? Some brands say that the choice depends on usage, some confidently assert that grind-on-demand is always the best choice, without question.

What is without doubt, says Ed Gooding of Mahlkoenig, one of the pioneer brands of the concept, is that many coffee-houses use a grinder which is not ideal for their purpose.

The new demands of grinding



The Ceado, from the Coffee Machine Company

"The most important thing you need to know is the volume of coffee that will be put through at peak performance," he says. "It is all well and good saying you do six kilos a day, but if five kilos of that is in one hour in the breakfast trade, you need to look carefully at the right grinder for that usage,"

Speed is a matter of contention. It is often argued that the grind-on-demand may be slower than the doser-grinder, but really it is a matter of very few seconds. There is also an argument that for a frantically busy bar, where there is so big a constant throughput that coffee is not at risk of staying in the chamber and going stale, then a traditional doser-grinder might win you a second a shot, which over hundreds of coffees in a rush period can be valuable time.

"Our Ceado delivers a double shot in about 5.5 seconds, and although I believe that you can find faster, the downside of speed alone is the problem of static, which makes the coffee spray everywhere or stick to the chute," says Marco Olmi. "So you can have a trade-off between speed and static. Grinders are messy things at the best of times, but ours is the cleanest I have found in what it puts, where you want it!"

"A finer grind takes longer, and gives less weight in the filter basket, therefore you may have to increase the time. However, you may not want to get too hung up worrying about your speed and your weights - if you're going to get hung up on anything, make it the quality of your coffee. Test until you get the delivery which gives you the taste you want."

Dosage is a matter of some thought. One noted British barista trainer, Jon Skinner, has observed that doser-grinders can produce strange inconsistencies – typically, the usual term for adjusting a doser-grinder is 'a notch', but 'one notch' on one grinder is not the same as 'one notch' on another grinder! It is, he has remarked, a comparatively crude system of measurement.

By contrast, the grind-on-demand grinder is precise – indeed, many average coffee-house operators may think it is too precise. But there are benefits.

"When 'dialling-in' or adjusting a grind-on-demand grinder, you are not only adjusting grind size, as you would with the traditional grinder, but you also have the second adjustment of time," explains Ed Gooding.

"If dialling in a new coffee, I will start with a stock setting, say grind setting of 3.5, at 3.8 seconds. I will then taste the coffee and make a grind adjustment, or more or less time to raise or lower the dose."

Coffee roasters will often give recipes for their coffees, and include dose and sometimes weight of espresso shot. This can be helpful... however, taste is key, and if your preferred recipe settings are different from the roaster's, then so be it!"

Is grind-on-demand any more accurate in dosing and portion control than a doser-grinder? Yes, and this is where one unexpected benefit comes in.

"With a traditional dosing chamber you will experience fluctuations in dose size correlating with the amount of coffee in the chamber," says Ed Gooding. "The more coffee in the chamber, the more weight pushing down on the coffee into the doser mechanism, and as a result, more coffee

dosed.

"A real benefit of our 'on-demands', the K30 or Pro M Espresso, is you can set the grinder in the morning and anybody can walk up to the grinder and pull an accurate shot to within 0.2gm."

How critical is such a tiny measurement? There are many debates over this - the general view is that for espresso, perfection to fractions of a gramme make a perceptible difference (with filter coffee, unless you're a real purist, you can have a bit more margin for error).

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Certainly, as Marco Olmi of the Coffee Machine Company has said, no barista can live with a doser machine that may deliver five grammes on one pull and eight grammes the next. And it happens, which is one reason why some baristas dispense more than they need into the portafilter and wiping away the excess is also wastage.

Here is the second benefit.

With the grind-on-demand machine, once you have decided exactly what weight makes your best coffee, you dial in that weight, and that is what you get. Traditional grinders can shoot coffee in all directions, which is wastage, and over-dosing into the portafilter and wiping away the excess is also wastage.

The more precise you are of your grind doses, the more coffees you know you brew per kilo, and an American café owner has said that his grind-on-demand machine paid for itself in two months simply by removing his wastage.

There is also the question of the modern espresso dosage, brought up by Matt Tuffee at La Cimbali.

The question of dosage, he observes, is something which has changed with the times. Whereas a barista would once always use 14gm for a double shot, it may now be 18-20gm, and with grind-on-demand the barista can be sure of getting that measure.



The Kahlkoenig K30, approved for use in the WBC



The Brasilia RR550D, from Caffe Society

"The problem of consistency with a doser-grinder is that you can easily get half-empty chambers... and the next person either gets more or less than they wanted!

"A lot of people still don't appreciate what grind-on-demand does, that makes it so different from the traditional grinder. I believe that when the benefits begin to resound with you, you may think that grind-on-demand works for everybody."

The is yet another problem with coffee grounds held in the dosing chamber of a traditional grinder, it has been pointed out. As they sit there, they can be affected by moisture, and can swell, which affects the resulting flow of the

espresso. With the grind-on-demand, there is no time for the ground coffee to be affected.

It is easy to get carried away with all these technicalities, but easy to bring the whole question back to something sensible, says Clive Danby of the Brew Group, distributing Brasilia grinders.

"The key things are adjustability, price, and dispense – which partly means that you shouldn't have to put up with machines which spray coffee left and right! Our machine is made under the same roof as the Brasilia machines, it's strong enough to enough to cope with life in a coffee shop, and it's only £400.

"But what it all comes down to is one

thing – taste. Work out what dose works for the best taste of your espresso and for your machine – and the grind-on-demand will let you stick to it."

Some of the aspects of grind-on-demand can become quite unrealistically obscure. Some machines will allow the portafilter to rest on hooks below the dosing spout so that the barista can quickly turn to do something else while the coffee is grinding, knowing that the pre-set dose will be correct.. there actually have been debates over whether the portafilter being manually held or resting in place on hooks affects the weight of the dose – but that is probably taking precision too far.

The concept of grind-on-demand is certainly firmly in place, so much so that La Cimbali, whose Casadio grinder has successfully gone through the evaluation process used for the World Barista Championships, now intends to create a small machine to suit pubs and bistros.

Fracino agrees with that, saying that on-demand grinding is now considered favourably by restaurants who formerly turned away from it. So does the Coffee Machine Company, with the additional opinion from Marco Olmi that more chic restaurants now prefer the silence of grind-on-demand, because it suits their ambience better than the old bang and rattle of the doser-grinder.

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Models



Traditional grinders in a variety of different configurations



Grind on demand

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A quite major and significant step in the promotion of 'ethical' coffee is about to be made by Miko, the creator of the Puro brand.

Miko is the producer and distributor which has an extremely broad coverage in Britain, although it is a name which stays well out of the headlines. It has expanded rapidly and widely throughout Britain, but always by acquisition, and the regional companies it has bought have in most cases retained their previous identity - so many coffee operators may be quite unaware that they are actually being supplied by an extremely big, and fairly rich, Belgian operation.

Its most familiar identity in the UK is Puro, a brand of ethically-sourced coffees which has done very well in becoming familiar - there are several parts of the country where the Puro A-boards can be regularly spotted, and possibly the product's major recent achievement has been to become the house coffee of the National Trust cafes.

It is also fairly widely known that Miko has activities in conservation work - its products often show pictures of exotic birds, and we were able to report a few months ago that the company had discovered an entirely new kind of orchid, which botanists had become pretty excited about.

However, the full extent of Miko's practical work in rainforest conservation has never really been put in front of the trade, or in front of consumers. And that is now about to change as the result of recent projects by Andy Orchard, who as international marketing consultant for the group is probably fairly unusual among coffee suppliers for having hacked his way through uncharted jungle to spend time with coffee farmers. (Most of our trade suppliers use an easier wholesale route!)

He has created a series of films

Puro's wildlife work - on film



Live webcam shots from the rainforest will soon be available for showing in individual coffee houses

showing just what happens in the several thousand acres of rainforest which Miko has purchased from the profits of Puro, and where it is putting its aid in social projects in other countries. One of the major reasons for producing the films is the belief that many in the coffee trade do not appreciate the full extent of the group's work - indeed, not all of those who distribute Puro know the whole story.

Miko, as a group, has been vocal in its beliefs about the need to protect the plant. It has said, quite clearly, that the Amazon rainforest acts as 'the lungs of our planet', because it provides the essential environmental world service of continuously recycling carbon dioxide

into oxygen. More than 20 per cent of the world's oxygen is produced in the Amazon.

At one time, rainforests covered fourteen per cent of the earth's surface, doing a similar job - today they cover just six per cent. It is estimated that in less than forty years, the earth's 'lungs' will not be operational, and that within 25 years, deforestation will have wiped out nearly half of the world's species of plants and animals.

Through Puro, Miko has already bought enough rainforest in Ecuador to hold central London, and has made a corporate statement which is nothing less than fighting talk aimed at other 'ethical' brands: "we see no sense in industry growth at the expense of community and the welfare of our planet. We aim to assist in every small way in halting the deforestation of our planet."

"We at Puro believe that many mission statements contain washed-out values, impersonal terminology, deliberately ambiguous and unachievable goal-setting and cliched generalisms. That kind of sleepy corporate talk is not for us.

"Our goals are to lead from the front in a new era of bio-sustainability."

That, says Andy Orchard, is not just talk. The industry does indeed have no end of 'initiatives' which really are just big brands paying lip-service to 'corporate responsibility'.

"I recognise that it is now fashionable, but in Miko, 'corporate responsibility' comes from within. It is not 'strategically calculated'!

"Because this is a family company, it is real, and that's why I believe a lot of the independent cafes and small chains are the ones which will identify with this. They are probably the most in the trade who are already working

most ethically - they don't have to worry about investor pressure if they want to give away a penny a cup for a good cause.

"Like them, Miko is independent enough to decide to absorb margin to do good, and I think that using our work to give our trade customers a story they can use, is seen to be a good thing."

And that, says Andy Orchard, is why he has been producing films.

"We're doing the films because there's so much depth in the whole story. In Ecuador, we have bought 5,400 acres of rainforest and cloud forest reserve land. This is relatively inaccessible - it's a full day's trek after you get off the bus, up and up through virgin forest, which is pretty unique... it's a machete to clear the way through the trees.

"This is critical land for protection, because of biodiversity, and so many species in one space. When logging companies come in and clear this kind of land, those species are no more."

Miko has another rainforest in a coffee-producing country. It has 400 acres in Brazil, in a rainforest which is under threat for another reason - it has become very expensive land, because the rich people in Rio are wanting to build holiday lodges in it."

The films can literally go a long way.

"Some of our biggest clients, who I thought all knew the story, turn out not to, so we can now explain the whole work to them. It's also important the final Puro drinker gets to see it. I expect there will turn out to be one master film and four or five spin-offs."

There is another interesting idea to get the rainforest in front of the coffee-drinker, which was first attempted last year, and is now expected to be working in 2012. It is the rainforest webcam - a picture to be shown in a coffee house to let customers see what is happening in a preserved rainforest at that very moment - 'in real time'.

"The UK market is saturated by coffee bars, and saturated with poor coffee, from companies who are solely after profit. Our webcam is to let café customers see what is actually happening, at that moment, in a forest saved by the coffee they're drinking.

"This is not just a nice calendar-type picture of what origin looked like when the brand sent a photographer there last year - it is a screen showing what is happening there 'now'.

"At the beginning, there was a technical problem transmitting from the rainforest, so we now have a system by which if the rainforest camera goes down, we switch to another location.

"The intention is to let clients display it next year, and some are already interested. It's an idea which will strike home with some consumers."

The question of 'buying rainforest' is intriguing. According to the World Land Trust, you can buy it for a hundred pounds an acre. But from whom? Who

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owns it? Is it inhabited, apart from by wildlife? And how does a company based in Belgium manage land in the Amazon?

"We don't own it. We have bought it in the name of organisations in the country, who work with the World Land Trust. Anyway, 'owning' land in Central America doesn't mean much - the important thing is protecting it."

One fairly obvious question arises about Miko's work. If they are keen on conserving rainforests, then why work with the World Land Trust - why not the Rainforest Alliance? Miko uses a tick-box argument as to why it made its choice, based on a series of points about the way the various organisations work in the field, how they charge for their certification, how much consumers get to know about where money is spent, and so on.

Candidly, Andy Orchard also says that the WLT was chosen to give a point of marketing difference - anyone can source a triple-certified (Rainforest Alliance, Fairtrade and organic) coffee from most roasters, but he wanted Miko to be clearly away from the pack.

Puro is however Fairtrade-certified.

"Is Fairtrade perfect?" muses Andy Orchard. "Probably not - but I have spoken to a lot of Fairtrade farmers, who tell me it has made a crucial difference for them. I've tried to find out if there is any criticism from the farmers, I've bought them a

lot of beers and tried to find out what they really think, and I haven't found any complaints. I believe in the principle, and it works for us."

The work is not entirely centred on the Amazon.

The first Miko film reports on the Trees4Schools project in Africa.

"This is just one of the initiatives we have been actively supporting for some years, and which we haven't really communicated to the general public," Andy Orchard told us. "In South Africa we have a distributor who used to work for Puro in the UK. But, in a country which has so many problems of its own, you can't go round saying you want to save rainforests in America... they throw up their hands and ask 'what about us?'"

"So we decided to align ourselves with a local idea - but there wasn't one. So we set up Trees4Schools, which has gone much farther than just planting trees. Having realised how hungry the kids were, we set up small vegetable gardens. Used motor tyres make a very good individual 'garden space', and now the best meal the child has is the one at school."

There remain two relative mysteries - the company and the coffee. Very few

people in the coffee trade know much about Miko: it has made no attempt to establish any kind of corporate personality, and seems to be some kind of secretive shadowy background figure operating through the identities of its UK subsidiaries. It is rumoured to be an extremely cash-rich company.

(Of what little is known, there is the curiosity that Miko as a company is actually older than its own country - Belgium seceded from the Netherlands several years after the business was formed.)

"To an extent, 'secretive' may be right," remarks Andy Orchard thoughtfully. "A lot of companies are over-revealing, which is why you get a lot of copying, and you end up with a lot of companies that are all the same. There's a lot that we keep under our hats. Yes, it is a rich company - 120 million euros a year, half of which is coffee, and half is plastics.

"Does it have a personality? Yes - it is a friendly company that gives people like me the freedom to make creative decisions. The Puro idea comes from the top, where they like a balance of people, planet and profit.

"Puro has certainly now found its own personality. It is now the 'export brand' of Miko, the main international product."

Puro coffee is a Fairtrade item made up of 80 per cent Guatemalan coffee, and 20 per cent Congo. The organic version is

an all-Arabica coffee from the Peruvian Andes.

"The Congo is an unusual source, but of course there are historic Belgian links. It goes further than just Fairtrade - we support the village, invest in their equipment, they grow the coffee, and we buy it from them.

"The Fairtrade organic is hundred-per-cent Peruvian, from a community of a thousand families who are doing text-book, best-case coffee farming - lots of small farmers, working in harmony with the environment, and making a living. Compare that with the big plantations who are chopping down trees and paying their staff peanuts - the ones in Peru are showing how to do it properly!"

What is the penetration of Puro across the UK? It may now come in for development, says Miko.

"The reason you see a lot of Puro A-boards outside London is that a lot of independents want to shout about using it, but a lot of our big clients in London don't. We are now supplying larger names, and we are beginning to supply bigger chains.

We are now in the position of being able to aim at the kind of account that we want to supply."



Miko's Andy Orchard (right) while living with coffee farmers

An application described as the 'most controversial in the town's history' has been thrown out by the council in Wendover. Costa's application to open in a former bank was rejected when the council heard that villagers were 'furious' at the prospect. The Wendover Society, told Aylesbury Vale's development control committee: "In 41 years, we have never known an issue that generated such a unity in opposition." A petition with more than 300 signatures was received opposing the bid.

Quickfire Tableware and Coffee Cups UK, the business which specialises in custom-decoration for coffee cups and plates, will be ten years old in December.

England's only tea plantation, Tregothnan in Cornwall (within sight of this magazine's offices!) has become a partner in an unusual twinning venture - it is now twinned with the entire Indian growing area of Darjeeling, the region which produces 'the champagne of teas'. Unlikely as it sounds, the two areas actually do share similar topographical and weather conditions - valleys and mists, relatively warm nights and dewy mornings. The two actually compete to see which first gets its magnolias to flower - big early blooms mean a good spring flush of tea.

Reuters has reported that coffee importers in the UK are 'fuming' over delays of several months in getting supplies of robusta out of warehouses in Antwerp. British roasters are quoted as saying that while there are immense stocks being held, some warehouses are not making supplies available for delivery to the roasters until the middle of January.

Living Ventures, the restaurant and bar company led by entrepreneurs Tim Bacon and Jeremy Roberts, is opening its Peppermint Bay café-deli concept in Manchester in late November.

The Asian press reports that China's 'quality watchdog' has accused Lipton of having unsafe levels of toxins in its Tie Guan Yin tea. The tea was found to contain 'rare-earths', which the brand points out come from the soil where the tea grew. The Chinese, it is reported, have cracked down on 19 foreign firms recently - an American consumer and healthcare group was told to 'practice morality', and Wal-Mart was fined \$425,000 and closed for a fortnight for allegedly selling ordinary pork as organic.

A legal case in Philadelphia, in which a woman has sued Dunkin' Donuts for putting sugar in her coffee, turns out not to be as mischievous as it first appeared. The woman went into diabetic shock, and had to be treated in hospital. She now claims she asked for artificial sweetener - the chain says that its employees only provide customers with the order

they ask for.

The international press has suggested that Starbucks will start a chain of juice bars, having bought out the American company Evolution Juice for \$30 million. Starbucks' boss Howard Schultz believes that he can achieve a foothold in the health food market, beginning with juice bars on the west coast in 2012. Evolution uses a heat-free, high-pressure pasteurisation process that it says retains more of the nutrients in its products than conventional heat pasteurisation.

The north-eastern coffee chain Central Bean has become a partner of the Turner prize. The contemporary art organisation will run an exhibition in Gateshead until January, and Central Bean will supply all the coffee onsite as well as running two coffee-themed events.

The Coffee Chemistry organisation of America will run a two-day seminar in London covering the science of coffee. The organisation says that 'unlike more subjective coffee seminars, this is intended to build on basic scientific principles to establish a more objective understanding of coffee science, taste, smell, and roasting chemistry. The cost of the seminar is \$495.

Joe Fogel of Printed Cups UK has been named 'young entrepreneur of the year' in the Essex Business Awards.

The Trade Mark Registry has partially revoked, but mostly upheld, Cadbury's right to trademark a particular shade of purple in relation to chocolate products. Nestle had complained that the association between the colour and Cadbury's chocolate was not strong enough to merit protection under trade mark law. The judgment said that while there was public interest in preventing a monopoly on any colour, in this case there was no doubt that Cadbury's use of purple had acquired sufficient goodwill to build up distinctive character in the use of it.

The Rusty Bucket coffee shop, Looe, has used its wall space to exhibit artworks by the local community school, saying that much educational artwork is usually stored in schools and is 'lost to the public'.

Annabel Townsend, or 'Doctor Coffee' of the Afternoon Tease business and the lady who launched a coffee festival in the north east, is moving to Canada to become the manager of the Kave Haz in Saskatchewan, 'the first third-wave coffee shop on the prairies!' Annabel recently completed a PhD thesis on the speciality coffee industry; she has said that she does not want the finished work to 'gather dust in Sheffield university's library', and we have high hopes that she will allow us to make the text available for wider publication.



Flour and Bean – the art of managing the re-brand

The link between bakery and coffee has always existed, but in today's market it grows stronger all the time. The latest move between the two comes from what was The Bakehouse of East Anglia, which has just rebranded itself as Flour & Bean, with a deliberate focus on fresh coffee to go beside its existing reputation as a craft baker.

The company has already refurbished four of its 14 shops under the new bakery and coffee shop brand, and one site has experienced a sales increase of 85 per cent.

A re-brand is often a tricky exercise, and those who do it badly can risk losing customers instead of gaining them. What did David Laingchild hope to achieve from it?

"Clearly the market is shifting, and for bakers to survive it is necessary to adapt and change their offer to their customers - but real emphasis is on craft, both bakery and coffee, on locally-made products and on great quality. Our plan was to create a modern contemporised bakers shop with a much wider choice of freshly prepared foods, with great ambience, with all our stores having music as background to create a relaxed atmosphere."

If bakers do not do this, he adds, there is a parallel to be found in other, virtually-bygone, trades.

"Bakers have for many years learned to survive and adjust by changing their offers and moving with the times. Failure to do so would surely have closed them down with the greengrocer and the fishmonger years ago.

"The industry has adopted fast foods, sandwiches, and now coffees and restaurant-style eateries. I believe that we offer something unique in that we make our products from scratch daily, and we offer something different from other coffee shops who buy in their cakes and patisserie - our pricing is therefore much lower than theirs.

"It also gives customers a great opportunity to go to different towns and try something a little different, instead of just the national groups which are cloning the high streets. Virtually all of our products are made by us each day."

Some of those products will probably not be found in other coffee houses. The Laingchilds offer Norfolk Shortcakes, Fruit Frumbles, and London Cheesecakes.

"These are all a twist of traditional baker's lines, and are all key products that sell well," says David Laingchild. But none of them is his bakery's biggest seller.

"Our number-one product is our sausage roll made from Suffolk pork and seasoned by us. Each week we sell in excess of six thousand units."

A craft bakery must approach its coffee also as a craft item, says Laingchild,

"The bean is essential to our concept, and without it we would not exist. Our customers know very quickly that we are different - we are not a superpower on the high street and we do offer great customer service and fresh product. All of my staff are trained to make great coffee and make good food, I now have our own in-house trainer, and I am the chief tester whenever I visit various shops.

"I have used Miko for their service and support and understanding of my business needs, and we decided that with their superb Fairtrade coffee bean that our equipment would come from them as a whole package ensuring great relationship. The espresso machines are Faema."

The next step is one that many owner-operators have thought about.

"I am very proud of the early achievements but we have still lots of plans to develop further, primarily opening into evenings in certain sites, and offering wine and beer with food. Ultimately it is our intention to be able to offer this model as a franchise package - it will provide a great lifestyle for a franchisee."



The new baguette branding takes off

Stokes brings speciality coffee to the town museum

One of the UK's notable roaster-retailers, Stokes of Lincoln, has high hopes for a new coffee-house it is launching in a rather unexpected venue - it has taken over the onsite café in the Collection, which is the town museum, and proposes to turn it in to a destination coffee-house.

Many catering facilities in such sites are disappointing in their attitude to tea and coffee, and the Collection's café rates barely a mention on the website of what is otherwise an extremely creative museum. Nick Peel, head of the Stokes business, thinks he can see potential to change that.

"The café has been operating since the museum was built, however it has never really taken off. It's a great space and has real potential assuming we can get the people there.

"The Collection is located slightly off the beaten track, so we hope to create a destination café by offering really fantastic coffee, tea and food. The refurbishment has been carried out by the museum, who provided all the soft furnishings, counters, etc - we provided a San Remo espresso machine.

"The museum have created a children's play area which I believe will attract a lot of interest, and we hope to provide catering for business meetings and groups as well as providing service to visitors to the museum and art gallery.

"The Collection has great scope to be developed out-of-hours as a location for private parties, launches, recitals, etc., which I am hoping to push once we get up and running - I ran an event-planning company prior to coming to work in the family business, so hopefully I can combine the two fields.

"We will be working very hard to promote the café to the general public and local businesses, and I hope we will be able to work hand-in-hand with the museum staff to maximize opportunities such as exhibitions."

Stokes' existing site on the High Bridge has been a Lincoln landmark for around eighty years, although the building is sixteenth-century.

Currently they serve over a thousand coffees and seven hundred teas a



Stokes' distinctive main site

week; the roastery gets through a tonne of beans every week, shipped to 600 clients.

One of Stokes' unusual products is its Blue Mountain Blend, which is tactfully described as 'emulating Jamaica Blue Mountain'.

"This was created about 55 years ago," explains Nick Peel. "Historically we always sold the Jamaica Blue Mountain and for some reason at that time, supplies were difficult to get hold of and extremely expensive so my father and grandfather developed this blend which 'emulates' the taste. We now sell both the real JBM and the blend."

Another unique Stokes coffee bears the traditional Lincoln name of Poacher.

"This was also developed years ago. It's a slightly stronger coffee than the Blue Mountain but still fairly smooth - good as a filter or cafetiere coffee."

Mick caters for the TV presenters

An interesting set of customers cropped up recently at Mick Hellier's Tea on the Green in Danbury, Essex - he found himself serving a television crew filming a story about afternoon tea for the One Show.

It was useful promotion for the venue, and interestingly, he was not expected to contribute anything - some celebrities rather expect everything to be 'complimentary', in return for bringing glory to their host, but these ones paid their way.

"There were five people including the presenter, Jay Raynor, the food historian he was talking with, and the crew. They insisted on paying for everything they had... they were far from mercenary," Mick Hellier told us. "They caused very little disruption, and our customers loved being a part of the whole event.

"We served them our version of afternoon tea, consisting of finger sandwiches to the customer's choice on various breads, homemade cakes and scones, and tea. Our sandwiches are freshly made to order, not pre-made as with some top hotels, and we offer toasted, or pitta breads, tortilla wraps, jackets, or ciabatta rolls."



Enthusiasm for the broadening concept of the 'brew bar' recently led Kaldi from his grazing grounds in south Cornwall to the bright lights of the big city, where he discovered this extremely neat set-up in the Sensory Lab in Wigmore Street. Essentially, it's Uber boiler, siphon, Aeropress and ceramic filters with accompanying scales and timers. The menu of the day was a Has Bean Kenyan (250ml siphon, £4) a Guatemalan by sister company St Ali (V60 filter, £3) a Has Bean Guatemalan through Aeropress at £3.50, and for the same price, a Square Mile Tzampetey from a volcanic micro-climate in Guatemala. It is remarkable how many similar brewing set-ups (and indeed how many similar choices of roasters) are popping up.



A very good flat white from Tapped and Packed of London, but look at the spoon – it's one of those souvenir spoons that holidaymakers collect. This one seems to be from the Isle of Man. When Kaldi remarked on it, the barista drew out an entire box of them. If you're lucky, you might get the working windmill one.



The Peck in Milan is probably the most expensive deli Kaldi's ever been in. Indeed, many travel reporters say it's one of the greatest delis in the world. Smoked salmon at hundreds of euros a kilo was one thing, but even salami at €35 a kilo rather surprised him. The downstairs wine cellar is so expensive that they say it's the Milan football teams and their wives who keep it going.



Kaldi ... at large in London and Milan

Most interesting was the coffee retail counter and nearby coffee bar. There were twenty six-kilo display jars lined up against the back wall, and a dozen two-kilo jars scattered around the counter display. That's around 150 kilos of roasted coffee on display. On enquiry, the girl behind the counter said that she refills some of the containers once a week, others less frequently... it cannot possibly be fresh! And the prices are painful - a fairly straightforward Brazilian is €45 euros per kilo, a Hawaiian Kona is €157, a Jamaica Blue Mountain is €230 euros, and kopi luwak, Kaldi can barely bring himself to report, is 580 euros per kilo.

However, even in this most wonderful of delis, the coffee bar is distinctly Italian - that means, you stand at a leaning-bar or poseur-bar, although that is provided with the daily papers.



The Peck Marrochino (above) and the Orefici's chocolate with cold whipped milk



The drink Kadli was offered was the house Marrochino – a shot of espresso in a glass, with powdered chocolate, and topped with latte milk. Chocolate with coffee turned out to be an enjoyably frequent thing in Milan. The Orefici is a tiny little bar which might have gone unnoticed, except for a knowledgeable guide. Here, you can get a similar drink except with a topping of cold whipped milk – you get the hot coffee coming through the cold milk. In the winter, they serve such things in a chocolate biscuit cup, of the wafer-biscuit kind, and the idea is to drink the coffee, then eat the cup.



Probably the oldest bar in Milan, and certainly the oldest in the classy Galleria Vittoria Emanuele shopping arcade, is the Zucca. It is said that the reason for the high counter is that the police would come in for a coffee and not have to get off their horses! This is the bar where Campari was invented, and the house cocktail is created from the root of rhubarb... the taste is impossible to describe. This bar is notable for the odd sight of one Cimballi machine sitting on top of another - an old vertical one stacked on a modern one. The old one is still suitable for dispensing hot water.



What's odd about the McDonald's and McCafe signs in the same gallery? They're gold on black, not red – every retailer in this ritzy arcade, even Prada, must keep to the corporate colours, and McDs is no exception.



Meanwile, back in London...

However unfashionably, Kaldi happens to be a fan of mocha. A good combination of chocolate and espresso is a fine thing, but it is usually just sloshed together in a cup or mug. How astonishing to find one served with such respect – this from Notes, in London's theatre district. Notes has several interesting aspects - one is that, located in theatreland, it doubles as a quite comprehensive classical CD store. The new head of wine there is proposing to run beginners' wine courses aimed at the cafe's coffee enthusiasts.

(Kaldi is greatly obliged to La Cimballi for the tour of Milan's coffee houses)

The loyalty 'card' goes hi-tech

The newest kind of coffee-house loyalty 'card' has appeared - it is a paperless system based on the new kind of scannable QR code, which can be 'read' by a customer's i-phone. The service is being promoted to the trade as being a free promotion, with no charge for the retailer. Fifty retailers signed up before the official November launch, and the first coffee bar user is thought to be My Coffee Stop, the bar on Enfield Chase station.

Cafes who take part appear on a list of retailers in the customer's i-phone. When the customer buys a coffee (or indeed any other appropriate product) the retailer presents their QR code, and the customer scans it through the camera part of the phone. Their phone screen displays a kind of graph showing how far they are towards a loyalty reward, and a prize symbol when they reach it. Customers redeem the reward by showing the completed 'card' to the retailer, who then makes another scan, which re-sets the card to zero.



them, they can do so by sending promotional messages through the Loyalli system.

There is however a management information software which shows an operator their customers' general usage of the system.

"The retailer can track and analyse customer trends through an online dashboard and respond by introducing promotions to attract new or repeat visits," the developer told us. "For example, if a coffee shop identified that regular customers tend to buy coffee at the beginning of the week but do not visit on Thursdays and Fridays, then the

The Loyalli presentation suggests that the dealer can promote to the cardholder through social networking. This means, say the developer, that they hope a consumer, having just used the system, will allow their progress to be 'shared' through Facebook or Twitter - everytime they get a 'stamp' or collect a reward, all their contacts are told about it.

"They get a simple statement on their message wall saying 'I just got stamped at Bold Street Coffee'," the developer told us. "This means retailers are achieving further marketing to the friends of their customers, who are likely local, so possible new customers."

Unlike paper cards, with which the consumer can be encouraged to write their address down on the back, and the completed card becomes information for a database, Loyalli makes no personal information about customers available to the retailer.

The argument is that this is an attractive option for the customers, who only have to give Loyalli an email address. If the retailer wants to communicate with

retailer could devise an offer that encourages daily visits to increase sales. This information would not have been possible using a card based stamp scheme.

"In the statistics, the retailer will be able to see cardholders not by name, but in categories, like 'hasn't been stamped in three weeks'. They could then message these people with an offer."

At My Coffee Stop in Enfield, Karen Mercer told us that she expects the system to speed up service.

"I envisage that it will be quicker and easier for the customer to take responsibility for scanning their 'stamp', while the barista gets on with serving. A phone is also more easily to hand than a loyalty card, which is often crammed with other loyalty cards in a wallet or purse.

"We're confident that this is the future for loyalty cards."

Espresso Head of Leighton Buzzard has been promoted as the only antipodean-style espresso bar in the area. It is run by Simone Aylward and her husband David Storey, who as art director of Chrysalis Records, designed album covers for such artists as Blondie, Elton John and Phil Collins, and whose work is expected to decorate the walls.

Leopolds, a 'Belgian-inspired tea shop' has opened in Northampton, opposite the Market Square, as a combined tea-room and chocolate house.

The Tyneside press report that the first café in the area to have an espresso machine has now closed - Franchi's Café, in South Shields Market Place, was set up fifty years ago.

The Wicked Coffee Company, which has built up a good business among educational establishments, took the curious step of inviting Facebook users to name its new coffee, created for a leisure company with fifty sites who wanted a new blend to compete with the chains. The winning name is Diavolo. Company chief Fergus Walsh tells us the blend is 'a balanced blend of chocolatey mocha and Central American coffees, a good body with a subtle caramel and butterscotch sweetness, balanced with earthy chocolate and citrus fruit notes'.

Jon Hassall, who spent six years as a senior operations man at AMT Coffee, the pioneer of railway-station sites, has moved to Patisserie Valerie as UK operations director. The brand has 52 locations and plans a further 15-20 in the next twelve months.

A woman who accidentally left engagement ring in the toilets of Starbucks in Edinburgh has had the item recovered - inexplicably, a member of staff found the ring eleven days later in a crunched-up envelope on one of the café chairs.

In our constant quest for the perfect afternoon tea, we think we have found a bargain. A private capsule in the London Eye, just £480 before Christmas. And another £18 per head for the tea!

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