

# Boughton's

## COFFEE HOUSE



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June 2012



The most entertaining book ever written about the coffee-house trade is now available – it supports two charities, at only £8.99. See page 11.

### Cafe cups to show caffeine contents?

At exactly the same time as a piece of health research from America announced that drinking coffee may help humans live longer, a professor of human nutrition at Glasgow University has said that caffeine levels vary so much in foodservice coffee, that caffeine content should be stated on cups or menus. Professor Mike Lean has welcomed comment from the trade, and we can report that several of the UK's top baristas and roasters intend to work with him.

A problem, according to Prof. Lean, is that while some evidence suggests that certain people, particularly pregnant ones, should limit their coffee intake, caffeine content of some coffees in some cafes can be many times higher than others. A survey of shops in Glasgow has found that the caffeine content of servings varied from 51mg to 322mg (although different cup sizes were involved).

This, said Prof Lean, makes coffee a 'problematic commodity' that is sold without information or warning, and he has asked the Food Standards Authority to carry out research. In response to a suggestion by this magazine that the coffee trade knows more about the subject than the FSA, Mike Lean said he welcomed input from the frontline experts.

"We would like to conduct a proper, representative survey across the country. The FSA has said they would consider it, but perhaps the industry should get it off the ground."

Several roasters and baristas welcomed the idea and said they wish to take part. One, roaster Steve Leighton of Has Bean, has told us that he has already conducted some experiments looking at caffeine content in different processing methods of the same coffee, which he will publish very soon.

Others have pointed out, slightly wickedly, that the very high content of caffeine in certain chain coffees might say a lot about the make-up of their blends which they might prefer not to see publicised!



Are the major chains 'bullying' their way into small local towns? This was the response of local cafes in one small town - full story, page 13.

### Takeaway coffee litter – a possible solution appears

A designer from Denmark has made the first decisive move to try and halt the international epidemic of coffee-cup litter in our streets. Although the coffee trade has paid lip-service to this problem for some years, no company has yet done anything imaginative - instead, the first collection mechanism has appeared in Copenhagen, to what appears to be positive acceptance from the public.

The project was begun by Sandra Hoj, who was annoyed at coffee litter in her area. She designed the 'Test Tube', a simple collection tube, based on a standard post office mailing product, and mounted it by a litter bin in a badly-littered area – and people used it.

"I had no idea you have a problem in England too," she told *Coffee House*. "There is definitely an international need to find a way to solve this problem."

"In big cities, it is a huge problem, but so easily solved, if only the coffee drinkers will play along. Here, you can tell they aim to dispose of their cups properly, but when there is no option to do so, they eventually dump them at random. I truly believe that you can work with the cup-litter-people."

"The first two tubes were up for a little less than a week, I was not involved with educating people on how to use them, other than the suggestive position of the tube and the short message on top. I was happy to see both tubes filling up, even if it was in slow motion!"



Before and after - Sandra Hoj's pictures of her own area



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A robotic coffee machine has been installed at the University of Texas. A co-founder of the Briggo machine is Patrick Pierce, an American competition barista, who helped robotics engineers create a system with 250 sensors that operate an espresso machine with movements which replicate those of a human barista. The robotics grind coffee to order, use a real tamper, and use a steam wand at the various correct angles, copied from the barista's own movements. The robots work behind a big wall of flat screens, fronted by a touchscreen sales panel. Students can order beverages from the panel, or order online and receive a text message when their coffee is ready to collect; a screen will tell them where their drink is in the queue.

Miko Coffee has won a Business Charity Award for its work with the World Land Trust for the protection of areas of rainforest in South America. Miko gives two per cent of sales from its Puro Fairtrade coffee to the protection of areas of rainforest in coffee-producing countries. So far, 5,600 acres of rainforest have been bought and protected, and Miko is hoping to acquire a further 2,200 acres. Meanwhile, Britain is rated the fifth-worst offender in a 'league table' of countries who contribute to the destruction of global biodiversity through imported goods. An Australian report says our large use of tea, coffee and palm oil lead to some of the worst destruction of natural habitat. Typically, production of cocoa and coffee has meant nine endangered species in Papua New Guinea are all now in danger of extinction.

Bettys café and tearooms in St Helen's Square, York, has celebrated its 75th anniversary. The Lord-Lieutenant of North Yorkshire was guest of honour. Bettys is experiencing such a demand for afternoon tea that it has had to begin a reservations-only service at weekends.

Waterstones is reported to be well into planning the launch of Café W, its own-brand coffee shop, in 130 of its bookstores. The chain would not add any information to us other than that they have run trials in Sutton and Greenwich.

There are ever-more additions to the recent spate of tasting evenings in coffee houses. In Topsham, Devon, Liz Hodges of the Route 2 coffee house hosted a 'casual hands-on coffee info night', run by David Stanton and pitched at the non-professional enthusiast. The idea was for a two-hour session of coffee history, some information about cultivation and processing, comparison of various brew methods and some hands-on roast-

ing, for a £5 entry fee. "This is not a masterclass!" David told us. "I'm pitching this to coffee lovers who want to find out some more about their favourite beverage." The first night resulted in some encouraging feedback, and interest in follow-up events. In Teddington, Astrora Coffee took over the local library for an evening of the origins of coffee, harvesting, roasting, tasting, and advice on how to brew the best coffee at home.

Global Radio has won a £2million sponsorship from Tetley tea, to sponsor Love Music Live events for the Heart stations. The deal runs until next January. Last year Tetley ran a three-month promotion with Smooth Radio. Meanwhile, it is reported that Tetley's TV advertising will ease back on the Tea Folk characters in favour of human actors.

The Jewish Union of Orthodox Congregations of America has taken legal action against a New Zealand coffee company over its trademark. The Underground coffee company symbol is a capital U with a circle around it, but the American body claims that as their logo is used to identify 500,000 kosher products worldwide, a similar one on coffee is 'likely to deceive or cause confusion'.

A Green Party councillor has called for Brighton to become 'the new Amsterdam' of Europe by allowing cannabis cafes to be licensed in a bid to boost tourism. "I expect to be misunderstood," he said, "and I predict the headline 'Green Councillor calls for Brighton to be the Pot Capital of Europe'." Rather, he said, he is highlighting the need for constant imaginative work to protect the city's tourist trade.



*Bunzl had promised to unveil 'a revolutionary new product, never before seen in the UK café bar market' at Caffé Culture, and this is it. What is the difference between this and any other take-away cup lid? It's the shape, says Bunzl. Whereas other lids have sharply-angled edges, the new Bunzl one is rounded. It is, therefore, claimed to be more comfortable to drink from. The product is available in the autumn.*



Stick at it, Gordon, and you could make a name for yourself...! The boot was on the other foot for superchef Gordon Ramsay when this candid snap was taken – he was in the Caffé Nero office to see what they thought of his new Bad Boys Bakery products. The clue is in the name – it's a Brixton Prison project, and he is training inmates in baking to give them a skill for when they get out. "You can imagine the havoc in our office when Gordon walked in with a tray of cakes!", Paul Ettinger told us. "We gave him a bit of a hard time with the tasting, but it's an interesting product - a lemon treacle cake with a cheesecake base, individually wrapped. They've done a really good job. We put it in some of our stores at £1.60, and it outsold brownies."



Here's a curious item found at the Caffé Culture show last month – it's a portafilter basket cleaner by Mitchell and Cooper. As you put the portafilter in the side, a rotor whizzes round and brushes the basket clean. It fits into a counter top, and underneath is a holder for a waste bag.

## Brasilia goes bust in Italy - but may live

**The Brasilia espresso machine company of Italy has been declared by the courts to be in 'a state of insolvency', and is effectively in administration. The British distributor Caffé Society of Yorkshire, has said that it has already put back-up plans into operation, has a large amount of spare parts in stock, and sees no need for Brasilia users to worry.**

According to the Italian local press, there are already suggestions of interest from prospective purchasers. In the UK, Caffé Society has said that it quite expects Brasilia to be re-born in some way or other, but has also turned to other makes of espresso machine - the company has become a distributor for Astoria machines, including several for which it has already devised some customised specifications, a couple of which were demonstrated at Caffé Culture.

## America finally turns against massive drinks

**There has been an interesting row in America over plans by the mayor of New York to effectively ban the large beverages which are so popular over there. He wants a 16oz cup size limit, to help address the nation's health and obesity problems.**

The local restaurant association is unhappy, and claims that the mayor has 'pushed through several other burdensome policies', such as banning smoking in public places, outlawing 'trans fats', and requiring chain operators post calorie counts and other nutrition information on their menus. Chain operators have complained that apart from affecting sales, explaining the rules to customers will hit their speed of service. By contrast, the Centre for Science in the Public Interest said they expected every city in the USA to follow, and that 'it is not the end of the world to have to sell small and medium drinks instead of large ones'.

Three major Italian coffee brands have moved further into the café business - Lavazza is to open a coffee shop at the Parkway shopping centre in Newbury, for what the retail press calls 'its first directly owned outlet'. The brand already has cafes in Belfast, Harrods and East Midlands airport, but this is the first under its new UK master franchise company. In America, Segafredo Zanetti will launch its first cafe in New York - it has 650 sites worldwide, but according to Ralph Lutton of Brodies in Edinburgh (owned by Zanetti) the concept has yet to work in the UK - one site in Baker Street, London, failed. And Illy is to open its first cafe on mainland China within a year. The company chief told Dow Jones Newswires, curiously, that "China will need a generation to become one of the top five coffee markets worldwide... it is important to be there early and to be present since the beginning." Many of the big chain names have, of course, been there for years.

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## Nespresso - more compatibles arrive

There have been three developments in the single-serve coffee capsule sector this month. First, the Espresso Coffee Club launched with the interesting declaration that the original Nespresso capsules are now out of patent, and that a legitimate compatible capsule can now be marketed – and then, surprisingly, the Caffè Vergnano brand stepped in to introduce its own Nespresso-compatible product. Then Capsul'in of France became the latest to promote the idea of a compatible capsule to be filled with the user's own choice of coffee – it is already sold through 500 coffee shops in France.

The Espresso Coffee Club, run by Oliver Wiley of Fakenham in Norfolk, has said that caterers can 'for the first time have a real alternative to the dominance of the original Nespresso coffee capsule', but at considerably lower prices. The new company has created six coffee blends, all of which roughly equate to similar ones in the Nespresso range.

"In regard to the patent, now it has lapsed it is OK to have Nespresso-compatible capsules," the company told us. "Like Nespresso, our capsules are made in Switzerland, are a very high quality, and a lot cheaper."

There was an immediate response from Luciano Franchi, who runs the Caffè Vergnano 1882 cafes in London. "Caffè Vergnano introduced capsules



The Caffè Vergnano capsule

elsewhere over a year ago with great success," he told us. "Consumers will now be able to buy the products directly from our London cafes, and soon from our website. We are excited to offer Nespresso machine users the chance to drink a decent coffee!"

The Espresso 1882 capsules are made of a biodegradable material, which complies with a European Directive – however, they cannot be classified as suitable for composting and count as biodegradable, non-recyclable waste.

Meanwhile, Nestlé is still reported to be claiming that the European Patent Office has upheld a ruling protecting it from compatible capsules made by other companies. The uncertainty over the true situation is probably because it has 1700 patents on the system.



A coffee shop in North Amsterdam is believed to be unique, in having been built entirely with second-hand materials. The Noorderparkbar coffee shop consists of three stripped-down portakabin-type units from a temporary hospital. All other materials for the building were found on the Dutch equivalent of eBay.

## Water walk highlights the needs of coffee farmers



The charitable part of the UK Coffee Week was again the Waterfall project, to provide fresh water supplies for people in coffee-growing regions. The aim was illustrated by a walk beside the Thames, with participants carrying a heavy amount of water, to show what African families have to do every day. The puzzle for this project, Allegra's Jeffrey Young told us, is getting the big companies to take part. "I am tremendously encouraged by the generous spirit of consumers and smaller coffee houses. Our challenge is to convince the chains that this is something that their customers actually want them to invest in."

Meanwhile, in Missouri, a Rotary Club has funded eleven water projects in coffee-growing countries through selling Green Mountain coffee. Rotarians go door-to-door selling bags of coffee, and have funded \$350,000 worth of water projects in four years in Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Bolivia, Haiti, Honduras, Guatemala, Sumatra, Malawi and Costa Rica.

## Caffè Culture up again

The Caffè Culture show in May drew an attendance of 4,662 visitors to see 230 exhibitors over the two days of the event - there is a five per cent increase in visitors numbers year-on-year.

Event Director Elliot Gard has told Coffee House that notable aspects of the show are the increasing number of new and small suppliers to the trade, and the continuing development of visitor types.

"Interestingly, we had more baristas among the visitors this year. I was delighted with their interest in the Taste Experience feature, which we had created very quickly, and although we had sixty seats for it, there were just as many standing, so this will be bigger next year.

"This year we had our highest number of exhibitors, but what we have also seen is a lot more small independent companies taking two-metre stands. These are small companies who need a platform, and they seem to be doing well, from what we have seen of the re-book requests - we have already seen a good number of the smaller ones wanting to come back.

"The most notable reaction we've had this year was from someone who said they had done enough business by 1pm on the first day to make the exercise worthwhile!"



What's unusual about these chocolate-coated coffee beans, a familiar cafe stock item, which we found at the London Coffee Festival? It's the milk chocolate, says the Rococo company. "The key to the chocolate-covered coffee bean is flavour," they say. "A bad bean and bad chocolate will give you a lousy result. And most people put the bean inside a dark chocolate, but if you do that you miss all the difference and contrast between the chocolate and the coffee. So we use a Papua New Guinea bean, in a milk chocolate."

A useful belief by Rococo is that chocolate should be priced fairly high – it even has one bar of Grenada chocolate, from its own plantation, deliberately 'priced to shock', at £11.95 for 85gm.

There is a practical equivalent in its coffee house stock, says Rococo - a bar of its other chocolate is probably 65p at trade, but some cafes are known to have achieved selling prices of £1.50-£1.80. It follows that chocolate-coated beans need not be underpriced.



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There has been some discontent over Costa's plans for a drive-thru cafe at Corstorphine Retail Park, Edinburgh, which would be the company's 24th site in the city, and the first drive-thru coffee bar in the area. The local community council has said that residents simply do not want it.

Cafédirect has appointed its new top man. He is John Steel, formerly of KitKat and Cadbury, Loyd Grossman and Cornish Sea Salt.

Staff at the Funky Monkey Coffee Company in Davenport, near Stockport, have been praised for their speed in helping a 'human fireball' who appeared in their café - it was a man who had tried to light a wood-burning stove in a nearby carpenter's business, with what has been suggested to be an 'accelerant' to get the fire going. The café staff very smartly put him out with dishwater over him. Rather charmingly, the café has been running a raffle to raise money for the carpenter, who will be off work for some time.

A sign of the times - almost 300 people applied for eleven jobs offered at a new Costa site in Newport. The manager said she spent several weeks going through the applications, because she had to interview 96 candidates who she described as being of 'exceptional calibre'.

There was a poser for film fans when the Seasons Coffee House in Taunton was officially opened last month - what was the major role played by Julie Dawn Cole, who performed the ceremony? She played Verucca, the horrible little girl in Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, in 1971. It is said that she still has the 'everlasting gobstopper' and the 'golden ticket' from the film, even though the cast were specifically told to return them after the filming.

Dave and Susan Slater of the Clifton Coffee Shop in South Shields, have raised £525 for a local hospice - by selling binoculars. Why a coffee shop has 350 pairs of binoculars to sell, we honestly don't know!

The next Norwich coffee festival will be on March 1st and 2nd, 2013.

Cafe2U, the mobile coffee chain, has claimed to be the first national

coffee operation to go over entirely to an 18gm portafilter basket as standard. Tom Acland, the UK managing director has said: "A bigger basket size means we are able to provide a fuller flavour, and more options of strength."

Java Republic of Dublin has said that it has sold out of the world's most expensive coffee for the fifth time - demand for kopi luwak, even priced at 68 euros for 250gm, has come from wedding receptions and birthday gifts. Java's Grace O' Shaughnessy told *Coffee House* that she is very aware of the ethical concerns over kopi luwak, and has confirmed and certified that her supply has come from wild cats only.

Limini Coffee of Bradford is now looking for distributors for the first time. The company's Yuri Vlag tells us that the offer is a unique one - "all the distributor needs to do is look after the customer. You don't have to worry about stock or paperwork."

The delightfully-named Always Sunday café of Edinburgh has closed after six years in business. Founder Mary McDonald tells us that a new landlord imposed a 66 per cent rent rise - backdated to last spring! As he also declined to renew the lease when it became due in 2014, Mary closed down immediately.

We always enjoy joint businesses, the ones which combine a café with something else - now, the Cafe Xpress Wash, of Three Bridges, has entered a planning application with Crawley Borough Council for a combined coffee-house and car-wash. Rather more dramatically, the American press tells of the New Jersey coffee house whose add-on services now include DNA swabbings for paternity tests, and filling in customers' tax returns!

Harriets coffee house and tea-rooms, which opened in Bury St Edmunds eleven years ago, has expanded to Cambridge. Roger and Tiffany Courtenay-Barrow say they have been trying to get into the city for eight years, and finally found a vacant site by sheer luck when they weren't looking for one. The couple hope to open a third Harriets in Norwich but say it may be a year off.

## Crowdfunding and carrot-mobbing

**Coffee houses across the world have been demonstrating two of the latest buzzword ideas in business in recent weeks - cafes in New Zealand report having been swamped by 'Carrotmob' customers, and one in Denver has paid for its expansion with 'crowd-funding'.**

A Carrotmob campaign is a social phenomenon in which an activist group of people offers to spend their money at one business, to encourage that business to support something the people care about. It is also called a 'buycott', literally the opposite of a boycott.

Organisers have said: "we use the carrot instead of the stick - in the past, people who wanted to influence businesses might threaten them, but we believe we can have more influence by giving them a positive incentive to change - our money."

Three cafes in New Zealand were 'mobbed' by a thousand consumers supporting one coffee-related campaign. The cafes had bid for the right to be chosen, in return for which they pledged to donate a large percentage of their takings, well over fifty per cent, to a solar-power system for coffee farmers in Papua New Guinea.

Elsewhere, another recent buzzword in the business world has been 'crowd' - 'crowd-sourcing' means soliciting ideas from a number of people, and 'crowd-funding' is raising money from a great number of investors, all giving a little. In Denver, America, the Hooked on Cofax coffee shop has used it to raise enough money to expand with a small kitchen and more seating.

Malissa and Scott Spero took on a vacant shop next door for their expansion, but it took so long to get all the building permits worked out, they ended up spending their investment money on rent for the site before they could use it.

They set themselves a target of \$15,000, and turned to Kickstarter, the online fund-raising site which allows businesses the chance to raise money from the public. With Kickstarter, a fundraising project must reach its goal in a set time, or they receive nothing and the sponsors keep their money.

The Speros acknowledged pledges with gifts on a set scale - anyone who gave \$50 got a mug, three lattes, one bagel sandwich, one item from the

night menu, and an invitation to the grand opening party. When two anonymous donors pledged \$1,000 each, the café owner said that anyone topping that would be offered a job!

They made it, with the support of 99 investors and a couple of days to go.

## Lotus - a new use for a known product



At Caffe Culture last month, the unusual new arrival from Lotus, the world leader in caramelised biscuits, was a new use for the product. In its usual form, the Lotus biscuit is individually wrapped, and sits on a saucer... in the new form, it's in a little hessian sack (bottom right of our pic) or in a shaker. It is the 'crumb' version of the caramelised biscuit.

"We think this has possibilities," says Lotus' Ian Lucas. "You can use it as a topping, or maybe as a cheesecake base. You can see the cross-branding, and the idea of selling 'a Lotus caramel cheesecake!'"

## Marco - the origin's on the cup side



Readers will know that we love imaginative uses for cups, and this is the idea from Marco, to be used at its brew bar at the big coffee event in Vienna this month. In the past they have given out a booklet to tell about the various coffees being served, but this year they have put the information on the cup. Marco's Paul Stack tells us that the method is a simple sticker - "when a roaster's coffee is being featured, the brew will be served in a plain paper cup with his relevant sticker attached, highlighting the roaster, the coffee, the origin, the farm, the processing method and the tasting notes."

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"Frankly the finest for cappuccino"

The café-bar trade is doing better than many critics would have us believe – but it is still a trade of two halves. A big number of coffee houses are doing noticeably better than they did last year... but a disturbing number are not, and confess to being short on the basic business skills they need.

The findings come from a survey run by the Coffee Boys, the colourful Irish consultants to the café-bar trade, in partnership with the Caffe Culture show. In preparation for the event's masterclass sessions, several hundred coffee-house proprietors, almost all of them independent owner-operators, were quizzed on how their businesses were performing.

The results were encouraging.

While it was not unexpected that 29 per cent of café owners reported trade to be down, it was striking that over 52 per cent reported trade up.

Only five per cent of businesses reported big declines of 20 per cent, and fewer than that were down between 15-20 per cent. By contrast, thirteen per cent were up to five per cent, eleven per cent reported being up between five and ten per cent, the same figure up between ten and fifteen per cent, and eleven per cent actually reporting increases of over twenty per cent on last year.

Interestingly, these results came from the smaller end of the trade - half of the respondents work on turnovers of less than £250,000, with another 25 per cent on less than half a million.

Although there were a couple of respondents with turnovers up to ten million, the researchers came to a mean turnover per coffee-house site of £257,500. Three businesses actually reported site turnovers of less than £50,000, and the lowest site turnover was £25,000. The highest turnover for any one site was just under £800,000 – the lowest turnover for an entire business was £125,000.

This, says Coffee Boy Johnny Richardson, shows that the coffee-house trade can still be an extremely tenuous existence for many operators.

"It shows how many very small outlets there still are. The somewhat harsh reality is that a lot of people are working tremendously hard for little or no financial return, and these are the ones who need basic business and marketing advice.

"The myth still exists, within the public eye and media reporting, that coffee

# The saviours of the high street?



At the Caffe Culture show this year, the Coffee Boys presented the results of a survey across hundreds of independent coffee shop owners.

It is true that many cafes are in trouble – but remarkably, many have shown big growth.

And all of them share some very basic management shortcomings.



shops are a highly lucrative venture. These figures help to dispel that myth."

In part of the research, the Coffee Boys asked how much coffee these outlets are getting through. There are some remarkably low figures – nearly half of all the respondents serve less than 500 coffees a week, many doing under 250. Seventy per cent of them sell under a thousand a week.

noticeable that most operators are looking for £2.20-£3 for a medium smoothie, and that tea is almost always priced low, well below £2.

A remarkable number of operators said they do not sell smoothies at all, and another surprising number do not sell muffins, although those who do reported pricing them very well at £1.50-£2. The most interesting item in

always mark you out. And it goes at a good price – £3.20, sometimes £4. Soup turns out to give a great margin."

In associated cafe services, it was notable that internet access is still low, being offered by only 39 per cent of respondents, and those who offer it almost always give it as a free service.

"My perspective, which is often argued against, is that free internet is a bad thing for a busy coffee shop," said Richardson challengingly. "It creates customers who use tables for a long time and negatively affects the ambience.

"It's a useful tool for a business that isn't busy enough, but for a successful shop, I think it's a detriment to profit."

Although so many of the coffee-bar trade are small businesses, it was notable that very few of them use any kind of 'business systems'. Sixty per cent of operators do not use any form of EPOS at all.

"I think there is confusion as to what EPOS is," remarked Richardson. "Café operators tell me they've been quoted thousands for EPOS systems, when a decent till can give you some very accurate reporting on sales. We preach a weekly stock-take using a simple spreadsheet."

Students of the Coffee Boys' books will recall that this was a very basic bit of management advice once given to Richardson, which he completely failed to heed, to his own detriment!

"You're correct," he responded to our teasing on this. "That weekly measurement is still the most powerful thing we do with our clients today. And it all started with that advice."

What do café owners think are the

“ People keep thinking that 'great coffee' will make everything OK...it won't! ”

- Johnny Richardson

The performance of tea was even lower, with the great majority doing less than 250 cups a week. (This was not down to the known problem of takeaway tea, because 80 per cent of the respondents have a 'sit-in' option.)

In the Coffee Boys pricing survey, latte and espresso produced no real surprises, generally at £1.80-£2.40 and £1.40-£2 respectively, but it was

the price survey was the value of soup, almost always approaching £3 and in several cases over £4.50 – yet 49 per cent of them said that they never offer it.

"I have been surprised at some pricings, and at some of the products not being sold," observed Johnny Richardson. "Smoothies are difficult to fit in operationally – there is consumer demand for them but it's remarkably hard to make money from them. The muffin has become somewhat old-fashioned among the elite end of the market, and in many cases the cupcake has overtaken it.

"The average soup price did seem high. It's an excellent, high-margin, fast-to-prepare product, so some operators may need to look at it. There are more long-life soups available, but you can throw together a tasty one onsite very quickly, and a fresh soup will

  
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biggest problems they face? Many answers were as expected, although the biggest of all was a surprise.

Around ten per cent of operators complain of not being able to get more customers, or to get customers to spend more, or to charge more for what they sell. Slightly more moan about not being able to find good enough staff, or being able to get them to perform as needed... in which connection, the biggest problem of all was of owners feeling unable to leave their business to their staff and being confident that it would function perfectly while the owner is away.

There is surely a common thread to all this, *Coffee House* pointed out. They cannot be due to external factors, or recessionary influences over which café operators have no control – these are all management issues, for which the business owners have direct responsibility.

"They are – and these figures are identical to what we witnessed four years ago when we asked the same questions!" returned Richardson. "Too many respondents say they struggle with the management, operational and systems parts of their business... and this is exactly what I see in the marketplace with our own clients."

And yet, beside these complaints, the performance figures show that many coffee houses are up on last year. So what do we draw from that?

"To see that 71 per cent are either level with what they were doing last year, or are doing better, is a brilliant performance," remarked Richardson. "Those who are struggling should be made aware of this figure. They should know that a lot of people are doing well, and that they shouldn't be blaming a recession for their own performance. They should be looking at what the others are doing, and asking: how are they doing that?"

The key is that profit is achieved by good practice, not by an over-concentration on fashionable drinks.

"Does it follow that a turnaround is something that they can realistically achieve? Almost certainly, yes. Certainly, it is hard to be in those streets where the big names have closed and the trade has gone – but in general, the coffee trade is doing great things for the high street.

"It is crazy that the industry, as a body, did not bother to make a presentation about this to the Portas report!

"I am one-hundred-per-cent of the opinion that coffee houses are a bonus and a draw to the high street. They are often vilified, and ranked along with bookies and charity shops and sex shops, but they are the places where people feel comfortable. They are the epicentre of the community, in a world where post offices and pubs are closing – they have become incredibly important, and not just for those small businesses who now do all their work from coffee shops.

"The coffee shops which turn them-

selves into the kind of place where people leave parcels for one another are now the proper centres of the community. Once you achieve this standing, it is very hard for customers to wrench themselves away from you – you're important to your community.

"From this perspective, the coffee shops are now the saviours of the high street."

This is all very well for 'talking up' the importance of the trade – but does it work in practice, and how do coffee-house operators turn this situation to their benefit?

"Café operators always want a magic bullet which will increase their sales, and telling operators to 'get involved in their community' is not as sexy as a magic marketing bullet. It's hard work, and it involves giving things away – you may have to give your space away in the evening to community groups.

"But there are direct tangible benefits. If you host local chamber of commerce meetings, you will get a lot of quid pro quo."

There are many cafes who are doing this, says Johnny Richardson. We even see some cafes who are organising self-help ideas groups for mutual support with other local businesses, an idea he applauds.

"Yes, and this all endorses the fact that while small coffee-bar owners need help, and while many cannot afford to pay for it, the help is there to get. Go and read books – not just mine, but read every book there is on the business. And if you can't afford the books, get them from the library. Take part in the blogs and forums and webinars that we run."

"The basic challenges are not changing, in that we still see that the kind of people who go into the coffee-shop business are not business people.

"Some of the stories I hear from them would break your heart. There are so many people earning so little, looking at a nett profit of five thousand at the end of the year, and there are more still paying their way out of past franchises – I met one at Caffe Culture who lost £150,000 on a sandwich franchise, which really stopped me in my tracks.

"So, there are many matters to be addressed, for those who really don't understand the figures of their business, and those who worry about the way their business is run when they're not on the premises."

It all proves one very basic point, says Johnny Richardson. That while running a coffee shop might seem glamorous or charming, depending on your own dreams, what makes it work is pure and basic business.

"People keep thinking that 'great coffee' will make everything OK, and make their café business work.

"It won't!"

*The Coffee Boys' series of seminars and 'webinars', and their work with Caffe Culture, will continue through the year. <http://thecoffeeboys.com>*

## Chester highlights its independents

Steve Kelsey of the Café Trade company in Chester has run a long promotion highlighting the quality of the city's independent operators. Several hundred people voted in a poll which gave the Mad Hatter's Tea Rooms the title of the city's favourite café.

"Although a small city, Chester is a significant UK tourist destination and has a growing number of coffee shops and cafes," Steve Kelsey told us. "Although the chains dominate the prime sites, we have over 30 independents.

"The city has an annual Food & Drink Festival, at which the 'best' cafes are awarded prizes – but these are decided by judges, not the regular patrons. So Cafe Trade ran a 12-week campaign to find the people's 'favourite' (not best) independent cafe.

"The customer comments collected in the survey showed that this trade is working hard to get things right at all levels, from quality beverages, quality food, to some exceptional customer service.

"Other such events are planned for



the future as we hope that Chester's independent coffee sector will rise to the challenge of bringing a better all-round offer to locals and tourists alike."

The Mad Hatters is located in a listed building within the city walls. It celebrates author Lewis Carroll, who wrote the Alice books and lived nearby, with a deliberate quirkiness of approach – a typical message from the café, in Alice style, says: 'we look forward to welcoming you...you're already late!'

## Pub group pins its hopes on coffee

The Welsh brewing company SA Brain says its acquisition of the Coffee#1 chain marks a possible course for the pub industry's future development. Chief executive Scott Waddington said that the pub industry is being hampered by the Government's 'frightening' tax regime, but that his newly-acquired café business requires less space and is not hindered by so many regulatory issues, and so he expects Coffee#1 to expand rapidly. "So the strategy is that we want to do more in coffee," he said. "The market might be saturated in London, where we have no plans to go, but we are looking for opportunities in Wales and the south-west of England. A milestone for us would be to hit 50 Coffee #1 outlets. We have said that we could add 6-7 a year, but the way things are going, we could easily do double-digit." The café chain has 18 sites and a turnover of £5 million.

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# Tea - the revolution is on

The shift to 'real tea', is actually happening, says Nick Kilby of Teapigs. It is not just a supplier's sales line - it is a firm trend.

"We very much believe in the importance of trying to raise the profile of tea in the same way as has been done in coffee," says the brand's Nick Kilby. "We did a little bit of research recently, all about what we call the Real Tea revolution, to see if we could get something quantifiable to talk to the trade about, rather than just our gut feel and intuition.

"We asked questions of consumers comparing attitudes and behaviour today compared to five years ago. Basically, people are getting more into real tea and are happy to pay more and search it out - 79 per cent believe that real tea is a luxury worth paying for, and 67 per cent are willing to pay more on tea than they used to. Fifty one per cent expect to drink more real tea over the next year. That tells us not to worry about price, because consumers understand that they get what they pay for. Those traders who are not serving real tea are losing out.

"We asked them whether they had drunk any of the following brands which we would classify as being real tea - Teapigs, Charbrew, Drury, Jing, Novus, Storm and Suki, who capture most of the new real tea volume. We confirmed that Teapigs is by a long way the leading real tea brand driving the revolution in real tea.

"Out of these tea drinkers, 82 per cent now expect to see either those brands, or the style of whole leaf tea, on menus, and 45 per cent actively seek these brands out. They would hope to see mentions of these brands on menus and point-of-sale."

Four-fifths of tea drinkers said they are more satisfied with the tea they drink now than five years ago. This, says Teapigs, is a direct reference to the better quality of tea they are now drinking from one of the



*We are beginning to think of this as a symbol of the tea revolution - green latte art! This is a matcha latte by Shoreditch Grind.*

real tea brands compared to what they were drinking before from paper tea bag brands. Commenting on their findings, Teapigs has said: 'it's all about trial, being in places where tea drinkers can experiment'. That's all very well, but how is the beverage operator going to encourage this? What kind of point-of-sale strategy turns a passing interest into 'I think I'll try one of those...'? "

This can be encouraged, said Teapigs.

"To encourage trial, have a 'tea of the day' and give out mini samples, like we do at shows, to get customers involved. Compare the performance of a coffee bar where the only mention of tea is the one word 'tea' on the menu, to one which actively promotes the fact they have whole-leaf tea, and promotes other ways of serving, such as iced, and lattes.

"The latter is obviously going to encourage their customers to be more experimental - that's what we

are constantly trying to open up."

The real clue for the operator, says Teapigs, is the number of new 'real tea' brands who are cropping up. This means the argument is not just one brand's sales line, but a genuine trend.

"We have noticed a lot of new kids on the block. The real tea revolution is actually happening and it is changing the image of tea, into 'a drink for today' appealing to younger consumers. Ninety per cent said that tea is no longer just a drink for grannies!

"What we've been saying for five years about upgrading tea menus, fresh brewed iced teas, and tea lattes, now seems to have become the norm. Obviously we're happy with that as we're obviously on to something!

"We'll keep pushing the message and of course with matcha I think we still have something very interesting, new and novel which will take some time to be understood. But the revolution is happening, and those who are not into it will miss out."

## Ugly business...

A new tea room has opened in Wales at the delightfully-named Ugly House. This is a site of historic interest owned by the Snowdonia Society - legend says that the crude stone cottage was built in the 1400s under an ancient law which said that anyone who built a house between sunset and sunrise, with walls, roof and smoking chimney, could claim the freehold. (A more modern story says that it is a 19th century fake!).

The new tearoom is run by Tim and Ayla Maddox, who also run the Tu Hwnt i'r Bont tearooms in Llanrwst.

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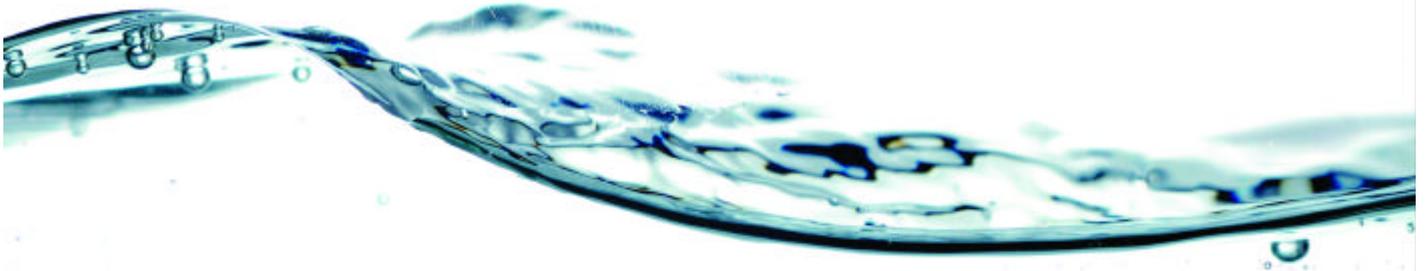
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**BUNN**

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It has been a welcome month for 'interesting teas' - and that, say several brands, is the most important thing of all for helping the trade profit.

"Adding spark to a tea menu has been a mission for us," says Allan Pirret of Novus. "We always encourage the operator to describe flavours on a menu, so the customer has an idea of how a more dynamic choice might taste.

"Persian Pomegranate, Wild Encounter, Organic Jasmine, Spiced Chai are just a few 'wow' products, but origin names such as Dragonwell Green, Pai Mu Tan, don't often see the light of day either. When they do, it is often the sign of a quality tea menu."

Pomegranate has appeared from another brand, which makes and fills its pyramid tea-bags in-house. Drury's white tea with rose and pomegranate is described as one to be promoted as a summer special, for summer afternoon tea. The colour is a kind of pale straw, because 'white' tea often has a hint of yellow to it, and it would probably go best with a light cake, maybe a Victoria sponge, and almost certainly well with cucumber sandwiches.

"We had had a pomegranate tea before," says the company. "We think someone else had already done a white tea with pomegranate, but that can be very sweet, so we used the rose to balance it. The result

# Putting the interest back into tea



*Not seen a profitable tea like this before? It's a matcha cheesecake! (idea courtesy of Teapigs)*

is pleasant - you would not be ashamed to double it up as a pot-pourri!

"It's very pleasant hot, and absolutely delicious iced. For an iced version, you do not overbrew it - for some iced teas, you deliberately brew strong, but

with this you don't overbrew, because the pomegranate and the rose hit a plateau, but the tea would keep extracting if you let it, and the result would be unbalanced. Brew two bags in a pot and pour over ice in a small jug."

"The problem with tea as an attention-getter," remarks Oscar Woolley of Suki, "is that it doesn't have a shiny expensive machine that makes steamy-frothy noises, or latte art. This is why most café owners are guilty of going too far the other way and plonking in a standard teabag.

"I'm definitely not a tea snob - I have milk and sugar in my Earl Grey! But the real parallel is that if you served instant coffee in a coffee shop, you would have it thrown back. If you are taking good money for tea, then you have to show something that's worth it.

"Tea isn't as much of a show-off product as coffee, and this is why we designed our teapots and our bamboo tray. Stick some single estate tea in there and you have an ethically sourced, beautifully presented, engaging and above all great tasting cuppa with the 'platter effect' - once someone sees another customer having one, they want it too!

"The most common question I get asked by café owners is whether the upgrade to loose leaf tea from teabags will alienate the elder customers who like a £1.30 cup of regular tea-bag tea? The answer is 'no' - our experience is that customers want 'something better' and are willing to pay that little extra, once a customer realises that your house black tea has so much more to offer. We also find that they become more inclined to experiment with your other loose-leaf teas.

"I can see this is really happening, and that coffee houses are taking more interest, because their take-up of our loose tea is increasing. When we first started, people looked at us for our fancy extras - now the enquiries are coming first for breakfast tea and the Belfast brew.

"When we see an award-winning hotel, which outdoes the Ritz in afternoon tea, thank us for what we have done in developing their sales, we know that there is interest in developing business with tea."

Suki is an enthusiast for what is still an unusual aspect of tea - the alcoholic tea cocktail.

"We are also beginning to see wider interest in this. Our red berry tea is good for this - a shot of Irish whiskey, top with ginger ale and ice, and it comes out deep red... delicious.

"And if you use Earl Grey in Bombay Sapphire gin as a cold infusion, you will get a classic result."

The Canton Tea Company has its new Canton Karma, which is made by them in-house from fresh organic herbs and spices.

The organic blend is inspired by Ayurveda, the traditional Indian use of herb-based remedies. It is an aromatic infusion with a spicy depth and sweet notes, from a mix of ginger, fennel seeds, whole cardamom pods, liquorice root, whole rosebuds and vanilla.

"The flavour of each individual ingredient is discernible but the overall flavour is balanced and smooth," director Jennifer Wood told us. "Ginger is warming and slightly spicy, fennel seeds give a hint of aniseed, the cardamom pods are aromatic while the rosebuds are delicate and smooth and the finish is sweet with liquorice root and vanilla. It's naturally caffeine free so it can be served at any time - brew in a glass teapot to let the customer fully appreciate the pretty infusion."

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# Pyramids – what's the right dose?

The whole subject of 'pyramid' teabags came back again last month when Peros, the UK's biggest distributor of Fairtrade beverages, launched its Eros tea and then claimed 'an innovative design that helps solve a perennial problem for many foodservice operators'.

This turned out to be a 'supersize' silk pyramid pouch, promoted as ideal for 12oz cup sizes in high-volume environments where traditional bag sizes cannot infuse fully or fast enough. Peros said, maybe vaguely, that these pouches 'contain more tea' and offer a complete infusion time of less than two minutes for a 12oz cup.

Pyramids, the bigger tea pouch which allow for whole-leaf tea instead of the 'dust' which can be contained in a flat tea-bag, continue to increase in the trade. The second pyramid launch of the month was from Brian Wogan, the Bristol roaster, with its new Mytea, for exactly this reason - director Adrian Wogan explained: "they contain only whole leaves or berries - no 'tea dust' in sight."

It was the Peros claim which activated the interest of other brands. What is the right bag size and gram-mage?

"Many pyramid brands have just 2gm of tea in all products," remarked Allen Pirret of Novus. "This is because it's easy to pack, but it does not take into account the tea characteristic, leaf or the brew. Some products are light on tea, and they struggle with very long infusion in a 12oz cup.

"The requirements of different cup sizes has been a great lesson in manufacturing a product that will stand the test of several different servings. The critical point is not how big the bag is - it is the right combination of grammage of tea and larger bag. No point having a bigger bag without much more tea in it, or it is a waste of time."

At Drury, which has its own pyramid production



Pyramids, from Drury. When picking a brand to serve, check the infusion in various cup sizes

line, Marco Olmi told us: "fundamentally, you need to pack according to leaf size and what desired result you want. Our breakfast teas are packed in a 3gm size as you want them to brew up nice and strong, and they certainly work in a 12oz serving. On the other hand, our whole chamomile flowers are packed in a 1.5gm size as you want a lighter, more subtle flavour. Same with white and green teas, which tend to be drunk fairly weak, so we pack in 2gm sizes.

"Most medium-strength teas (Earl Grey, Darjeeling) are packed in 2.5g sizes, as this offers the best flavour across a range of cup sizes. But you certainly can't have a one-size-fits-all approach to packing pyramids."

Teapigs said: "our everyday brew is a 3.3gm dose which is what's required to give people the strength of everyday brew they expect, and will easily do a 12oz mug. We did a lot of work to get our doses right, and it does annoy us when people serve a two-cup teapot and only put in one bag. It just won't work as you're obviously serving a half measure!"

## The selection of taste

One of the fascinating aspects of the modern tea menu is that so much choice is now available of the same flavours from several suppliers. When faced with this, how does the beverage operator go about making a decision? We asked two brands who offer the same flavours.

There are some flavours which are notorious - peppermint is now a standard part of the afternoon tea menu, but it is very easy to get it horribly wrong, and select one which tastes appalling.

"What is important is that the customer knows exactly what they are getting from each brand," remarks Paul Jefferies of Tetley. "Look for consistency in visual and taste characteristics - a balance of cool minty notes and the warmer caramel flavours."

Trust your taste, says Paul Maxwell of Beyond the Bean, which has the Cosy tea range.

"The main thing is always - try it. If you like a tea, you'll sell it. If your customers know you like a product, they'll be interested in it. Make absolutely sure all your staff know what your teas taste like.

"I've always found that standard peppermint tea either smells fantastic, and then tastes of nothing, or smells of nothing and tastes like toothpaste! We did seventeen or eighteen tastings for the Cosy peppermint, and we say the operator must now try it for themselves. If you think it's good, then say on the menu 'this is the best peppermint we have tried'. That will mean something to your customer."

You have to be just as careful in choosing an Earl Grey to serve, says Cosy. "Some, even after five or six minutes' steeping, still just taste like black tea... some, after thirty seconds, taste like soap!"

The clue is to keep tasting, says Tetley.

"We use a good bergamot flavour granule," says Paul Jefferies. "Some companies use bergamot oils, but these can be volatile, so they may smell nice for a few days and evaporate over time, leaving a disap-

pointingly weak experience."

Both brands have flavoured green teas, both have worked with lemon and jasmine, and Tetley again makes the point that the tea content should not be masked by the additional flavour. The brand also warns that the correct brewing time is essential.

"It is understood that green tea is ideally brewed at 80c, but not all caterers will have access to equipment that can deliver that, or indeed the time while trying to make other drinks. So make sure that if you're leaving the bag in, that the transit time from kettle to table is short, and be sure to advise the consumer to take the bag out when their desired colour is achieved or when two minutes is up."

There is a major principle on choosing the tea to serve, says Paul Maxwell - taste it, and then be prepared to move to get the best.

"We are always willing to change something to improve it - and that's also a good philosophy for the café operator.

"This is why selling a brand may be unhelpful. Taking a full range from one brand name is easier, and you may get away with it, but you won't do as well with it. Better, if you happen to like the green tea from another brand, then use that... and you can then say 'I've chosen this tea because...'

"If you want to charge a premium, giving the customer a reason for your choice is good. You can even charge more for your house English Breakfast, if you can say 'we've tried them all, and this one is the best'. To express your own favourites on your menu is always good."

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"I have classified my own place in coffee!" declares David Littlejohn cheerfully, throwing himself down on a sofa in LJ's at 7.30 on a sunny Soho morning. "I am a businessman first, and a barista second."

In Soho, this is heresy. LJ's is deep in the historic heart of the coffee area, within calling distance of Bar Italia and the Algerian Coffee Stores, and almost within hand's reach of the sign marking the site of the 2i's, the 1950s coffee house which was the birthplace of British rock'n'roll.

But so what, continues Littlejohn challengingly, if he likes to start his working day with a caramel latte?

"There has been a lot of talk about the snobbishness of independent coffee here, and there are now a few coffee bars being so idealist, and setting the bar so high, that customers now feel they are not going to get what they want from these places. The customers are told why they are not allowed milk or sugar, and how they must look for the tastes of lemon zest and tobacco smoke, and all the press is trying to make this level the thing to focus on.

"Well, there is a place for that, but it's not in the mainstream.

"In hospitality, this came and went years ago. At one point hotels had something strike them - they realised that 90 per cent of the people, 90 per cent of the time, are going out for 'a nice time', and that 'special experiences' do not sustain a business.

"That's why I'm happy being in the middle."

And yet, LJ's has received a lot of praise for its atmosphere and coffee quality. The café is in the theatre district, which accounts for the signed posters on the walls, including two of David Suchet in character as Poirot, praising 'the best coffee in London'.

"I want the consistency of the chains, with the quality of the independent," remarks Littlejohn. "We use only Union Hand-Roasted coffee, and I think they've got it right. They've understood the middle ground - they have achieved the right drinkable coffee for the ninety per cent of people who want 'a good coffee', and who are then happy to find a boldness and a certain intensity of flavour."

David Littlejohn's interest in what the majority of consumers want has led him down some interesting paths of research, not least his recent experiments on the policy of charging for 'extras'.

"We had always charged extra for soya milk, for no reason other than that's what people do! I started thinking about it, and thought - we're not cheap, soya milk is now competitively priced, so there's no justification for it. Why are we doing this?

"So we took the extra charge off, and I hope we will soon stop seeing café menus with 'soya extra' on them.

"The same goes with flavours. Nor should we charge for an extra shot. If

# A moment on the lips...

Coffee houses should be places for challenging political debate, for mainstream coffee tastes... and for no unjustifiable charges for 'extras', says David Littlejohn at LJ's.



customers ask for an extra shot in their latte, it's because they've got used to thinking they need it, because of the lack of taste from coffees elsewhere. So the next thing I'd like to see is - you want an extra shot, have it!

"A big question is always of how to add value. One answer is, don't charge for extras, because you can't put a value on the goodwill you get back.



An LJ's lips-shaped stool

The bigger philosophy, says David Littlejohn, is that it is well worth getting out of the 'cost plus' pricing argument.

"A product is worth what people are willing to pay for it. It has nothing to do with the buying-in cost of that product.

"We decided not to knock out the same old hot chocolate as everyone else. So, we started putting a little disc of Koko Collection chocolate on the saucer, and customers started talking about it. We had one who noticed it, and went right through our hot chocolate menu trying everything else... he spent £15 in here in an hour. He was happy to do so, and that came through adding a little 'wow factor'."



Such experiences fascinate David Littlejohn. He is a happy student of what works in a café, and what does not.

"I have made two big mistakes here. I paid £2,000 for a sign above the door... which nobody reads. I could have done it better for ten pounds. The lesson is not to fall into the trap of wanting your name up - it doesn't do anything, because what people want to see are the words 'coffee house'.

"My other mistake was in losing my nerve when I found that having the counter where I wanted it, at the front, would put my opening back ten days. So it went at the back - but it should be at the front, where people can see you making coffee.

"If the coffee machine is near the window and people can see what you're doing, you remove a 'barrier to entry'. By removing our doors in summer, we'll be able to serve straight on to the street, and customers will get the sight, the smell, the buzz, and all the things that are important.

"Compared to this, the position of seats isn't that important. The people have already paid their money, so they can sit at the back!"

However, there are some aspects to LJ's seating which customers really should see. The majority is leather sofas, on the grounds that David wanted 'the living-room feel where people could relax', but by the window are

some fascinating stools which look like a pair of lips. They were supposed to be shaped as coffee beans, but during their construction, the similarity to lips was realised and a last-minute change was made.

(They were built by the Littlejohns, who are a creative family - another family company makes teddy-bears).

All this philosophical business debate fits with the general image of LJ's, which is a café for discussion - you want a political debate, come to LJ's. It is, says David with a grin, a fair approximation of what the original London coffee houses were all about.

"We're a very political coffee shop, and a lot of discussion goes on in here.

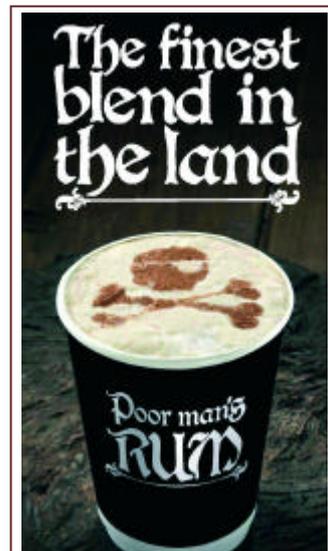
"I'm a conservative - what else would you expect from rural Hampshire? - and we have a lot from the other sides coming in here. I have lost one customer on the grounds that he 'didn't like the politics we spout', but for every one like that, we have ten more who enjoy the political banter.

"The only problem, and it is the politicians who have caused this, is that people now think every argument has to be polarised, which prevents real debate and banter, and which is more likely to have an argument end in a fight.

"Here, we respect people's views even if we don't agree with them - and that's what's lacking everywhere else these days.

"We love this, and it's another reason why I'm a businessman first and a barista second, and it's a big reason why people keep coming back to my place.

"It is most certainly not 'all about the coffee'!"



There are very few things we like better than imaginative point-of-sale coffee promotion, and we were overjoyed by this fine example from the West Cornwall Pasty Company in, of all places, Paddington station. Note the skull and crossbones chocolate stencil and the 'poor man's rum' slogan.

No wonder the government didn't have a chance with the pasty tax...

Barely a week goes by in our magazine's news coverage without a town community or council somewhere complaining that one of the big chains has ruined their high street.

The petitions are getting bigger, the complaints are getting stronger and more aggressive. And now they're getting more creative, too.

In Totnes, a pretty Devon town, the independent traders have reacted to the potential arrival of Costa in a remarkably imaginative way – in May they held a two-week coffee festival, complete with open-air demonstrations, a local barista contest with a difficult twist, and votes for best local café.

The nearby roaster Owens of Modbury prepared a special coffee for the event, over 3,000 people signed a petition against the Costa application, and a 'clonestopping' poster appeared throughout the town, featuring pictures of several local baristas.

The Transition Town Totnes organisation said: "the independent coffee festival aims to send out a clear signal to any chain coffee shops that Totnes is doing just fine for quality coffee venues and their presence would not be appropriate here."

Costa's application, it has been reported, actually included details of other towns across the UK where it has successfully opened despite residents' objections. If this is true, it would be a quite breathtaking declaration that it does not care about local feelings, and as such it had a predictable response in Totnes - the local chamber of commerce said their response was "a statement of 'take us on if you think you're hard enough'!"

The coffee project is just one part of the overall 'transition town' programme, which sets out to ensure the development of a town the way residents want it, explains Hannah Jones of the local Kitchen Table catering business. It is not surprising to discover that Rob Hopkins, the founder of what is now a worldwide Transition Town movement, lives in Totnes.

"Transition Town Totnes was set up five years ago," Hannah told *Coffee House*. "It involves members of the community doing things to create a resilient future for the town, while making sure the town is kept the way we want it to be.

"The chairman of the chamber of commerce has pointed out that the chains aren't interested in giving any thing back to towns – they say they'll create jobs, but of course they take them away."

The festival is reported to have achieved one major objective, in making residents and visitors aware of the town's rich variety of quality caterers and cafes.

"We have all heard that Costa says it makes good coffee, but the point is that our people make excellent coffee, and we needed to raise awareness of

# Clonestoppers!



Amanda Gregory of Fat Lemons (above) and Clonestopper Hannah Jones



this," remarks Hannah.

"Twenty six venues entered for the project, including a few pubs. All of them ran promotions of some kind or other.

"The public were given little scorecards with each drink served, food and ambience, etc., and these were put in voting boxes. Thousands of votes were counted – it took us hours and hours, there were a lot of favourites, and it was a close result."

(The winner of the 'best café' vote was the Fat Lemons, run by Amanda and Ian Gregory. This is a tucked-away little coffee house on the corner of the delightfully-named Ticklemore Street, with three or four inside tables and four outside bench tables. It serves Mokarabia coffee and Novus tea... and the tea, nicely, comes with a shortbread biscuit.)

"Then we had the barista contest on a lovely sunny day in the food market. The competition was run on the local Beanbug coffee trike, and the unusual part was that everybody used a two-group lever machine, which was different to what most of the locals had worked on before!"

The event was widely agreed to be a great day out – but with what result?

"What did it achieve? It put a lot of information out there about Costa coming, and allowed a lot of people to make up their minds. Without this, people would not have known about the

issues involved. And 3,000 signatures against Costa out of a population of 9,000 is a big figure."

Costa do have a site in mind, in a high street which is full of listed buildings. What happens if they just move in, start work, and try to make a retrospective application? "This petition says that one-third of the town will actively boycott them," responds Hannah firmly.

This, it turns out, is not an idle threat – it has happened before, and nearby. In Tavistock, a few miles north of Totnes, it caused the first-ever closure of a McDonalds because no local customers would use it.

That was in 2006, the year Tavistock market was voted the best in the region by *Country Life* magazine, and the chairman of the Tavistock Forward and EatWise organisations, said: "It just goes to show that the food is so good here we have seen them off. We have made every effort to make Tavistock a haven for local independent food, and McDonald's wasn't, so they suffered."

And what of Costa's reaction in Totnes? We did of course ask, and got a response which will hardly endear the brand to the locals. "Nothing major to comment on at this stage," said a spokesperson, "other than a general statement about bringing jobs to the area etc..."

The action taken in Totnes is serious fighting talk backed up with serious activity, remarks Hannah Jones, and it is a project which she expects other towns to watch with interest, and maybe take up for themselves.

"We certainly do... we want this to be an example that others can follow."

After 2,000 people signed an online petition against Starbucks opening in London's Hackney Market, the chain denied that it had plans to do so. Locals had said that the arrival of a chain could be 'the beginning of the end' for an independent market.

## Are the chains being 'bullies'?

It is noticeable how many times the word 'bullying' now appears in the local press to describe the attitude of the big chains.

Three commercial and local-interest groups have joined to protect the 'unique character' of Southwold, Suffolk, against a proposed opening by Costa.

The organisations said: "Southwold already has 20 outlets in the town centre where coffee can be bought. The National Planning Policy Framework which local authorities must follow says any new development or change of use should 'reflect the individuality of town centres and improve diversity and vitality'. The arrival of a Costa Coffee shop would have completely the opposite effect."

The mayor of Southwold said "I can say with authority that we are not going to be bullied by these people."

In Wiltshire, the chairman of the local chamber of commerce has also criticised plans for a Costa opening which he said had been going on 'behind closed doors' without any public information. He said: "as a town we do need to be careful about where things are moving."

In Skipton, a retrospective Caffe Nero application has gone to a public hearing after councillors refused approval for a café already trading.

The hearing was told that that the council's policy, of insisting on 81 per cent of shops in the core area being retail only on the ground floor, was central to the town's continued success, and was devised, in the words of a former councillor, to stop Skipton becoming "just a place for the tea-and-pee" visitor.

Agents for Caffe Nero argued that the council's policy was outdated and in fact posed a risk for the future of the town.

(Asked by this magazine whether a brand had the right to criticise what local people want for their own town, Caffe Nero did not respond).

A former councillor accused Caffe Nero of 'bullying' its way into the town.

Elsewhere, Costa is reported to have expressed regret after a franchisee's 'bullying' of a rival in Southampton. Bobby Lader of Power Gourmet handed out small smoothie samples to passers-by, but was reported to the city council for 'illegal sampling' and 'aggressive marketing tactics' by a Costa franchisee, who also allegedly threatened that if the independent wished to 'go to war', then Costa 'has very deep pockets'.

Mr Lader said that he felt 'bullied'.

In a statement to the local press, Costa said that 'this type of behaviour is not something we condone. We regret that this incident has occurred'.

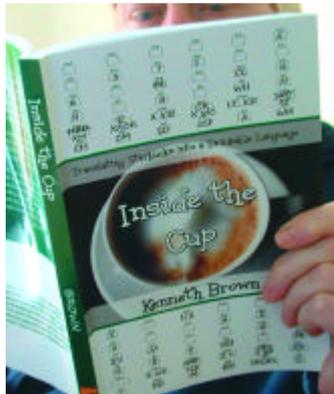
It has often been suggested that the best books about Starbucks are those written by people who have been on the staff - and the latest one is a truly fascinating item which addresses the age-old problem of 'Starbucks language', and takes an extremely detailed look at how the company's drinks are made.

Kenny Brown of Massachusetts managed Starbucks sites and trained staff for several years, and he tells us that he realised very early on that the brand's 'mystique' had also created a communication gap between the staff and the customers. "I found a real disconnect between the company and some customers," he told Coffee House. "So throughout this book I attempted to answer the questions posed to me time and again, ranging from beverage modifications to nutritional information."

That term 'beverage modifications' does, of course, refer to the thing which Starbucks has always considered so important - the need to deliver a drink to a customer as the customer wants it. As a result, Starbucks has been criticised for giving in to some really bizarre requests, but it is also widely acknowledged that putting the customer's requirements first is an important customer-service principle.

A fascinating aspect of many books written by Starbucks staff is their almost-unquestioned loyalty to the brand. Many of them do not realise at all that the rest of the trade considers Starbucks practices to be a little odd.

# The making of the Starbucks menu



Kenny Brown is clearly a Starbucks loyalist, but he is not blind to the bizarre aspects of the brand's practices. "A customer asks for a small coffee," he writes, "the barista nods and repeats 'tall', and when corrected, tells the customer that in Starbucks, a 'small' one is a 'tall' one. No wonder the customer may never come back!"

"I've always felt," he writes, "that one of the greatest obstacles is that customers don't understand the drinks. They truly don't understand what Starbucks is offering. They are uninformed... and in some cases, misinformed."

For working baristas, the interest in this book is the way the writer interprets the various Starbucks products and practices, all in exhaustive detail.

It is when Kenny gets to the 'modifications' that we really start having fun. He offers examples of true customised orders from his own experience: there was the regular who wanted 'a tall espresso shot from the left spout of the left machine, sit for twenty seconds, non-fat milk to within one inch of the top of the cup, whole milk for the top inch, 170F, no foam'. One would ask for 'a tall chai syrup, extra hot, light caramel drizzle, whole milk foam, seven Splenda, and steamed apple juice'. Another's regular drink was a venti with ten shots and ice.

(He also tells us of his customer who regularly took a drink with twelve Splenda sweeteners, until she decided to cut back... so she went down to eleven and a half!)

There are no less than ninety-one pages on the detail of Starbucks recipes, with possible modifications. Some are odd, and some seem worth experimenting with. The seven-shot venti no-dairy iced Starbucks Doubleshot should, says the author, be illegal - and it is hard to argue.

Curiously, he also suggests that Starbucks will make a customer's drink 'partially decaffeinated' - that is, a quarter decaf, a half decaf, or three-quarters decaf. This appears to be done by combining shots of caffeinated coffee with shots of decaf, but the suggestion that 'you can break down the caffeine percentages any way you want it' does remain a bit of a puzzle.

It turns out that Starbucks baristas are also very used to customised demands involving milk - half soy and half non-fat is quite common, he says, and so is non-fat steamed milk with whole milk foam.

And once you've got the hang of all these variants, you'll be qualified for the next 25 interesting pages, on how to get hired at Starbucks. This long chapter is truly illuminating - the writer has interviewed and hired a vast number of staff for the brand, and again, he is willing to criticise Starbucks' procedures - the decision to only accept applications online, he points out, meant that many of them disappeared into a black hole, and removed a branch manager's opportunity to make a spot assessment of any applicant as they handed in their form.

Whether you use it to confirm your Starbucks prejudices or to understand the brand more, this is a fascinating piece of work.

*Inside The Cup, by Kenneth Brown, published by Fee, Boston. ISBN 978-0-9852408-0-6. \$14.99 (but we have seen it on Amazon UK for a fiver.)*

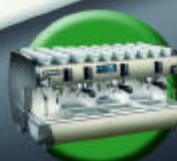
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What are the flavour ideas which café operators can use to create new items for their menus or their specials boards?

The leading wholesaler of flavours to the trade, Jon Money of Cream Supplies, reckons that we are seeing a shift to 'more interesting' flavours than the obvious sugar-based ones. However, not all flavour brands are being imaginative or creative.

"On the one hand, flavours are easy, because anyone can buy them in. There are flavour brands who simply access a commercial 'flavour bank' and just take what's on the shelf. Others have been thinking.

"Traditionally in this trade, we are dealing with a population brought up on 'easy flavours', the things associated with sweetness. A flavour should not be just something sweet and easy, it should be a more intelligent approach. We're now looking beyond caramel, and we find that some brands are now looking at flavours other than the sweet ones. So we now see interest in bitter flavours, which highlights the way tastes have changed. We can see more of a move towards plants - Monin are doing basil and cardamom."

Beyond the Bean, he notes, have recently added chilli to its Sweetbird flavours - it makes a quite remarkable hot chocolate, 'traditional' in the sense that it's what Montezuma drank centuries ago!

"This trend towards bitter flavours will show the industry that there are more things to use than sugar, and I expect we shall see many more extracts. We can certainly see people

# Disabling the customer's 'price-sensitivity' gene

turning to a bit of bitterness or spiciness."

A curious development by Monin is the interest in 'dessert' flavourings. It has already created pastry-like textures to allow for the unusual apple-pie latte, and now even has a new flavour which is based on a gâteau.

The value of this, says Monin's James Coston, is in thinking about the wider uses of a flavour to a coffee shop menu.

"What you now have is the diversity of flavour in different forms - do you want to promote it in your latte, your shake, or your frappe? You are also getting into the area of the flavour you serve with a spoon, the 'thicker' things on your menu.

"Our tiramisu is a flavour you can add to cake mixes, and you can just as well add it to your lattes - although I don't think I have ever seen a tiramisu latte on a menu. In this, things like a Black Forest shake make very good sense - the same flavour with a frappe gives you an ice-cold Black Forest, and it makes a really good hot chocolate! You can do the same with crème brulee flavour, which means you can extend your menu several times with one flavour."

What do these do for profitability?

"You'll sell more syrups by promoting



James Coston - adding profitability with dessert flavours

the drink than the idea of an 'added flavour'. You can charge more for a 'Black Forest frappuccino' than you can for a latte 'with syrup extra'. In the case of the speciality item, the price of the drink is the price of the drink. People do not feel they've had to pay any 'extra'."

There are more 'extensions', says John McGinnell, the new sales manager at Fracino espresso machines. The

idea of the flavoured iced coffee is vastly under-used. The method is - a single shot of espresso into a tall glass with half a dozen ice cubes. Fill with cold milk, add a single or double shot of hazelnut syrup, and blend. In a tall glass, he says, the customer gets a similar experience to having a Guinness poured - waves which start very light and become darker with frothy cream at the top.

John Taylerson of Malmesbury syrups, with Barry Cook of Cafelicious in Swindon, did an entire presentation on the subject at Caffe Culture.

"There is an unwritten contract between the customer and the café owner - 'yes, you can come in out of the cold, but you have to spend something worthwhile!'

Flavours help break people out of their usual purchasing habits and encourage them to try something new, and that is when you can get them to spend more. This can be Christmas, bank holidays, or just very hot or cold days. This is when you introduce such flavours as spiced smoothies or mulled apple juice.

"If you make your own signature drink you can add tremendous value if you offer it properly - that's what makes a customer say: 'I'll disable my price-sensitivity gene and pay a decent price for that!'

## Adding alcohol - without a licence

An extremely unusual new kind of flavouring is Monte Bello syrups and 'coffee brandies' from Gourmet Classic. The brandies have a fairly low alcohol content, but enough to deliver something more than 'just' a flavour. "We found coffee shops wanted more of an 'adult experience', but don't want to go through getting a liquor licence," says sales director Mark Joyce. "So we thought of coffee liqueurs which disperse well in coffee, at 20ml in an eight-ounce cup. We did a soft launch at Hotelympia and were overwhelmed, because the idea of a sandwich bar selling such a coffee is an entirely new idea!"

The flavours are calvados, kirsch, pear William, plum and strawberry. They work in coffee, chocolate and tea, although you use half the amount in tea. "The everyday coffee-bar owner should taste them in a straight filter coffee. Smell with your eyes closed, taste with your eyes closed. Tasting in milk is also correct, because milk is a very good carrier of flavour." A box of 50ml samplers (pictured) is available.



The idea of flavoured instant coffee is not new, but this one is unusual in that it comes in paper 'sticks', similar to the format used by Starbucks in its recent instant coffee product. In this case, the beans are infused with the flavour after roasting. "Other flavoured coffees use artificial products sprayed on to a granule," says the company's Ali Ataei, "and because coffee has a strong aroma, you need a lot of artificial flavouring to kill that aroma. We use actual fruit, in a very long process between roasting and converting to powder. It took me a year and a half of testing. The powdering is our own production, and we will soon have Rainforest Alliance certification." One stick is enough for a small mug of coffee. The three flavours are apple, strawberry and pineapple, and the company suggests that the drink be mixed with milk and sugar, depending on how you generally take your coffee - we found that the addition of both did bring the flavour out much more.



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# Beware the Games police...

The Roy Ireland espresso company, working with Rancilio and Drury tea and coffee, has won an extremely large contract to provide machines and coffee to the concession bars and cafes for all of the Olympic Games events that are held outside of the actual Olympic village... however, due to the curious publicity rules which are being applied around the games, they are not allowed to promote the news as widely as they would like.

They are not alone. It has been widely reported that the Games have already been blighted by the over-enthusiastic application of action to 'protect' the massive companies who have sponsored the event. As a result, even small cafes who try to spark enthusiasm with an Olympic-themes display or menu may end up in trouble.

Sponsors who have together paid a billion dollars are demanding extreme levels of exclusivity within 'Brand Exclusion Zones' which extend for one kilometre around all Olympic venues, and two kilometres for road events. No brands that compete with official sponsor brands can advertise, and spectators wearing competitor-branded clothing, taking in the wrong food or drink, or (so it is claimed) even trying to pay with the wrong credit card, will be in trouble.

The crackdowns are permitted, a legal correspondent has commented, because of legislation which gave sponsors protection which goes beyond existing copyright and contract law. Amazingly, it is only sponsors who can use the words 'games', '2012', 'twentytwelve', or 'two thousand and twelve'.

The O2 Arena has been re-branded for the duration, because O2's rival BT is a sponsor. Marston's the



*You'll be safer not to risk this... !*

brewer, which is the official beer concession at Lord's, will have its pumps there closed down to allow sponsor Heineken to be served – and even cricketer Matthew Hoggard, the brand's ambassador, will reportedly have his pictures removed for the duration.

It is these rules and enforcements which have already allegedly required the long-standing Olympic cafe in East London to take down the first letter of its sign and thus rename itself 'Lympic' to avoid being sued by the Games trademark police.

Some international sports writers have been recalling past cases of the remarkable steps that other businesses have taken to get around this at past sporting events.

Thirty-six female football fans were thrown out of a Holland match

at the 2010 World Cup, having been hired to wear orange mini dresses promoting a Dutch brewery. They were accused of 'ambush marketing', or promoting a product other than the 'authorised' beverage supplier. At the same event, the soccer star Edgar Davids was given a ticking-off for carrying out a post-match interview while blatantly wearing a sports shirt made by a firm other than the authorized one – he was of course employed as an 'ambassador' by the rival clothing firm.

Heineken attempted to 'ambush' Carlsberg's official sponsorship of the UEFA cup in 2008 by creating branded hats for Dutch fans to wear, doubling as drums for the supporters to make noise with. At the Open golf championships in 2008, Bentley set up a prominent row of its parked cars, specifically to deflect interest from the Lexus official sponsorship. At the French tennis the same year, a sports clothing maker ambushed the sponsors Adidas and Lacoste with a display of an enormous tennis ball on top of a car, 'crashed' outside the arena.

Event organisers can expect a summer of such ambush marketing, according to a comment from Coventry University's Centre for the International Business of Sport.



The international press, right around the world, have shown great interest in the story of a County Durham tea room owner who threw three customers out for not standing when the national anthem was played.

The Royal Teas cafe in Stanhope was set up to mark the jubilee by a former Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the County of Durham, who is reportedly also a former Guinness Book of Records holder for the largest collection of royal memorabilia.

The café is full of such items, and tables and chairs are decorated with the union flag.

At 3pm each day, customers are invited to stand while the anthem is played – but it was the ejection of three who refused to do so which caught the attention of the world's press. Notably, said the owner, it was the teenagers in the tearooms at the time who were most shocked by this lack of respect from adult customers.

Comments to the local paper seemed overwhelmingly in favour of the tea-room owner.

Among them were: "Completely barmy, but that's one of the great things about being British! Her gaff, her rules. Well done!"



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