

Boughton's

COFFEE HOUSE



Scoop Malone, the best writer on the cafe and beverage sector by far, brings you another terrific issue of the trade's top news magazine!

October 2012



Pedal power for street espresso

The prototype of an entirely pedal-powered mobile coffee cart has appeared in London, designed for an MA course by graduates of the Royal College of Art.

The Velopresso, by students Amos Reid Field and Lasse Oiva, is a tricycle modified so that a gear switch allows the pedals to either move the bike, or to operate the grinder. At present, brew water is heated by a mountaineers' multi-fuel stove using camping gas.

"The entire machine is entirely bespoke," Amos Reid Field has told *Coffee House*. "We have now tested it at several events, including one where we produced 200 coffees in a seven-hour shift with one single-lever espresso machine.

"The grinder is powered directly by pedalling – it effortlessly produces a double shot in five seconds, and the grinder is silent aside from the sound of the coffee being milled.

"The espresso machine is a traditional sprung lever co-designed with Fracino. We have also been helped by Londinium Espresso, Monmouth Coffee and others."

Fracino's Adrian Maxwell told us: "We helped them complete the project in the nick of time, building a special one-group lever machine from scratch. It's a fantastic idea that works really well."

Starbucks pioneers jobs for deaf baristas



Arezo makes a point in sign language to a presenter from the Deaf Nation TV channel in America

The cafe trade has been intrigued, and indeed quite impressed, by a filmed interview produced by an organisation for the deaf in California. It features a deaf barista hired by Starbucks, and shows how she copes with handling customers in a perfectly normal coffee house situation. The video has been watched with interest by café owners in the UK, who have considered how practical it is to hire staff with complete deafness.

Arezo, the barista, explains in signed conversation the problems encountered when serving customers, and how she copes. One hazard, she points out, is that to a lip-reader, many drinks 'look' exactly the same.

Among the strategies devised between Starbucks and the employee are ways to ensure that Arezo serves a lot of regular customers. She also memorises a lot of information about customers and drinks, and keeps a pen and pad close to hand – if communication fails, she invites the customer to write their order, and apparently this is very sympathetically received.

This magazine directed several British companies to the video, and enquired whether they can do the same. Most of our chains were intrigued by the idea, but were unable to comment further – at SSP, the operator of the international Caffe Ritazza brand, Stuart Coombes said that it gave him particular food for thought as to what could be done in cafes at international airports, with many languages spoken by customers.

Rebecca Griffin, the head of campaigns at Action On Hearing Loss (formerly the RNID), was impressed by the possibilities.

"What a great film!" she told us. "It shows how people who are deaf can be productive members of any team with just a few simple adjustments. Arezo uses signing, and can lip-read, so it's important for her to be able to see her customers' faces clearly, which means making good lighting available.

"She uses a pen and paper when she gets stuck, so this means her manager providing the right tools - there is also a lot of assistive equipment you can use, from loop systems to textphones.

"In the UK, there is a scheme called Access to Work where assistance from government could pay for equipment support in the workplace. So our message to coffee houses owners is: with a few practical adjustments and training, you'll find deaf people can be very valuable employees."

Meanwhile, in California, Arezo has expressed a firm ambition - she now has coffee shop management in mind.

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BLACKBOARD ART, COFFEE & HAIRCUTS, and CLOUSEAU IN THE COFFEE HOUSE

This month's featured cafes, pages 14-15

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Allegra Strategies' latest European coffee symposium will be in Amsterdam on 22nd November. Organiser Jeffrey Young says that a highlight speaker may be Tom Clark from Coutume Cafe, a roaster-retailer in Paris - he will talk about his experience of pioneering the third wave in a country not entirely respected for the quality of its coffee!

Starbucks began its three-day 'global leadership conference' in Houston with a promise that the participants, store managers from right across the chain, would contribute many hours during the conference to local community service projects including work with the homeless. During the conference, said to have cost the brand \$35 million, participants worked in a 400,000 sq.ft. 'Leaders' Lab', which 'guided conference participants through a two-hour interactive journey that brings Starbucks' mission statement to life'.

A Berkshire couple who turned a derelict building into a café-bar, and were then hit with a one thousand per cent rent increase by their local council, will have to wait until the new year to find out whether the decision will stand. The local press reports that the operators of the Pinewood Bar and Café were offered the derelict building at £2,000 a year for two years, on the condition that it might rise by £6,000... but were then given notice of a rise to £22,000. A petition of 800 names was raised and the council has decided 'to hold further discussions'.

Masteroast, the large contract roaster which recently reached its 30th year in business, has now bought its 40,000 sq ft premises in Peterborough and has commented that one out of every nine out-of-home coffees is supplied through a Masteroast client.

Drink Me Chai, the company which was formed to introduce the idea of instant powdered chai drinks, has re-branded itself as The Interesting Drinks Company, to allow it to broaden its product range considerably. The new launches from the company are powdered milkshakes called Bubble Froot, which are flavoured mixes with complementary fruit-flavoured balls.

Innovia Films of Cumbria has produced the latest version of its NatureFlex fully compostable coffee bag. The film is wood-based, and is said to break down in a home compost bin or industrial composting within a matter of weeks. Roaster Lincoln and York is one of the companies known to have experimented with the format in the past.

In yet another case of dissatisfaction with the 'scores on the doors' hygiene ratings, Caffè Grazia of Derby is to appeal against a four-star rating, saying that it gives an 'unfair' impression of its cafes.

Bill Gates is putting \$8 million into the Coffee Partnership for Tanzania, which seeks to double the yield and income of 85,000 smallholder coffee farmers in the country.

Trade terms baffle buyers

The Speciality Coffee Association of America has produced a study which appears to show that while customers will pay a premium for coffee which 'tastes better', trade terms like 'speciality coffee' mean nothing to them.

The *Speciality Coffee Consumer Research* suggests that most consumers don't know what goes into making some coffee better, or why - just that they like it when they get it. Nor are they that interested in the detail - the SCAA discards the belief that coffee enthusiasts follow coffee blogs and websites. Instead, they 'recoil' from too much coffee information, or having it pressed upon them.

The question this opens up, of course, is of how to promote the concept effectively... and that probably applies equally on this side of the pond.

The SCAA's report is intended to be an insight into who the 'speciality coffee consumer' is, what is their perception of 'speciality', and what motivates them to buy the coffee they do.

The project was based on focus group meetings in Los Angeles and Portland, with participants heavily 'screened' beforehand.

The SCAA concluded that the concept of 'speciality coffee' means very little to users, with some believing it to mean espresso-based, and others thinking it means an added flavouring. Even those who consider themselves enthusiastic about good coffee, say the researchers, turned out to be 'not terribly knowledgeable', with much of what they believed about coffee being inaccurate.

In a rather curious aspect of this project, the researchers had predicted that consumers would not be able to express themselves coherently in words, and so had allowed for the opportunity of self-expression by means of collages, in which respondents were allowed to create scrapbook-type stuck-together images in an attempt to communicate what coffee means to them.

There is, conclude the researchers, a need to help the consumer define what constitutes 'better' coffee.

Lots of coffee on the small screen

It really has been an active, if extremely strange, month for coffee-themed videos and advertisements.

Channel 4 has screened what Costa calls 'its most integrated campaign yet', which is one which is spread across TV, print, digital and in-store appearances. It is further 'integrated' in that the project features competition winners and customers. This rather odd advertisement features dozens of male and female customers buried up to their necks in coffee beans while singing the Kiss song *I Was Made for Loving You*.

Costa's slightly-confusing explanation is that 'by putting Costa fans together with our baristas, it playfully makes the point that they really are the stars'.

Meanwhile, an entertaining little new ad from Cafedirect is about the values of working with coffee farmers, and slips in a couple of unmistakeable digs at larger brands - one comment is that Cafedirect's work with farmers is 'proper sharing, not pretend-sharing', followed by the remark that 'while big is busy growing bigger, small is growing better...'

The Rainforest Alliance's awareness



week was marked by a video, perhaps excessively American in nature, which attempted to show that saving rain-forests is best attempted not by going to join indigenous peoples there, but by buying products with the appropriate ethical-sourcing mark. It was an extremely 'zany' production.

Meanwhile, the regular *In My Mug* video by roaster Steve Leighton of Has Bean has registered its 200th episode. The videos discuss, in some detail, the roaster's chosen coffees, sources, and brewing details - they tend to be around 18 minutes or so, so you do have to be prepared to sit down and listen, but it is a fascinating concept, and remains still far more imaginative than the work of many trade suppliers.

The Matthews Yard 'working space' coffee house in Croydon is marking 'Stoptober', the anti-smoking campaign, by giving away free coffee for a random 28 minutes every day. The figure comes from the statistics which say that if you give up smoking for 28 days, you have the highest chance of staying off.

In the same mood, Café Trade of Chester is encouraging coffee-shop owners to mark the awareness month of 'Movember', in which men grow moustaches to promote awareness of prostate and testicular cancer. On the understanding that not all men can grow a 'tache quickly, the company has helpfully provided a supply of chocolate ones - they are being made by Cochoco of Manchester. Café Trade will be organising the North West's first dedicated coffee festival as part of next year's Chester Food & Drink event.



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Little's, the coffee roaster from Devon, has launched a single-serve stick version of its flavoured instant coffee. It is an aggressive move from a roaster which both argues 26 years' experience in conventional 'speciality' coffee, and which yet has built up beside that an appreciable business in pre-flavoured ground and instant products.

The new product is directly aimed at hotels, cafes, gyms and offices, and is marketed on an argument of higher quality than the giant instant brands, and yet comparability on price. Little's has nine flavours in its existing range of flavoured instants, and has introduced hazelnut and bourbon vanilla in sticks, with more to follow.

An interesting aspect of the launch is that Little's argues a higher standard of flavouring than usually found in the coffee sector.

"Essentially, most flavourings are made by a few very large companies, and we don't source from these companies," director Will Little told *Coffee House*. "There are a few flavour houses who are very good at the American-style 'in your face' and 'sickly' flavourings, and we steer well clear of these.

"We try and source the most convincing versions of each flavouring as we possibly can. Most of the flavourings we use are natural, but some of them just need a little 'nature identical' flavouring to bring them along. Our hazelnut, which has the least natural flavouring content, still consists of around 85 per cent natural flavouring to 15 per cent nature-identical."

It is always said that a flavour cannot save a bad coffee - and it is also said that a vast amount of instant coffee is of the grades that nobody else wants. How has Little's achieved a drinkable result?

"We have always believed that flavour shouldn't be added to mask a bad coffee. Equally, because most instant is made using defected and low-grade beans, there have been brands who have used quite a hefty amount of artificial flavours to overpower a harsh



Will Little - working on convincing flavours in an instant coffee format



Little's claims top quality in flavour sticks

instant coffee base - we, on the other hand, realised that if you take higher-quality beans which have a very well-balanced and mild aroma, you can use natural flavourings, and far less of them.

"The reason I can sleep at night knowing that I have added flavouring to a top grade Central American Arabica coffee as an instant is because I know I have created 'balance'."

On testing, *Coffee House* suggested to the roaster that the beverages worked best with milk, and also with sugar.

"I agree," replied Will Little. "Our instant coffee base is not a harsh one, and so may be relatively uninteresting when drunk on its own. It is with flavouring that it works really well, and milk and sugar make our flavoured instant coffees come alive.

"So, quite unlike 'regular' coffee, I always recommend consumers add either or both."

McDonald's may start selling its coffee beans in packages for home brewing. A trademark application was filed last month in the USA, where a concentration on coffee has increased McDonald's market share considerably against the other major chains. Financial writers have pointed out that the beans-for-home market there is so big, even a low single-figure percentage is worth having.

Chris York is retiring from the post of UK sales director at Marco, a position he has held for over 12 years, but will remain part-time as sales development manager. Daniel Versey has taken over.

The Dalla Corte espresso machine brand has hosted an interesting international barista workshop in Milan, in which national finalists in the latte art and 'coffee in good spirits' contests (the latter is the one which features alcohol) were invited to train on the Dalla Corte espresso machine and the Mahlkoenig grinder which are to be used in the world finals next month. In the spirits contest, there is now a requirement for a drink to be made with Grand Marnier, a new sponsor.

The Tea & Coffee Festival at the Southbank Centre, London, from 2-4 November will feature 40 exhibitors and include a demonstration by Michelin-starred chef Adam Simmonds, who will use tea and coffee in savoury dishes.

It was a good year for the 'northern quarter' of Manchester in the city's Food and Drink awards. North Tea Power was named coffee bar of the year, while its near-neighbour Teacup was 'best casual dining' venue. And another neighbour, Tea Power tells us, won 'pub of the year'!

Steven Prime, of Esquires in Coventry, has been named 'Midlands and North Wales Franchisee of the Year' in the HSBC awards. The judges said they liked the way he worked with local school children to tell about ethical business practice.

The international press has taken a heroic view of Ahmed Jama, a British-Somali man who has given up his catering business in the UK to return home to Mogadishu in spite of the violence there - he has twice survived suicide bomb attacks, and his Village Café now needs to be rebuilt after another bomb incident. The trade interest is that his coffee house has become a favourite for foreign journalists, who like his espresso, and his way of making it - it's a lever machine, but because of the constant electricity black-outs, he has invented a way of using it with water heated by a coal fire.



The coffee and cake chain Patisserie Valerie has devised an attention-getting series of tea-tasting sessions in its cafes. The sessions are held by Oscar Woolley of Suki Tea (pictured hard at work, above) and consumers are invited to apply for a free place. The response is sufficiently good that after the first five sessions, the chain proposes to continue.



Burts, the 'artisan' crisp maker, has created the first-ever Guinness-flavoured crisp. We are told that Burts undertook six months of tasting exercises to get it right!

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Karen Mercer of My Coffee Stop on Enfield Chase railway station has been named as one of the 'Top 100 Business Mums in the UK', as part of Business Mum Week (which is delightfully shortened to just BMW). Her café is involved in several local business initiatives, including social media workshops, local artists' events, womens' business networking, support for a local theatre company, and the intriguing concept of 'free pop-ups in the waiting room'. The Mums Club exists to promote the value of business-owning mothers.

There is a remarkable amount of debate still occurring under government proposals to scrap the requirement for a licence for live music in small venues. Plans to scrap restrictions for venues holding less than 200 are to go to consultation, and the tourism minister has said that the changes could provide an "important source of new income" to hospitality and catering businesses. One music industry body suggests that 13,000 venues of all kinds could benefit; the Noise Abatement Society says there will be a "dramatic rise" in complaints and greater friction between residents and catering businesses.

A staff member at McDonald's has allegedly been fired for putting too much chocolate on a dessert. The worker alleges that she was asked to make a 'nice one' of the McFlurry ice creams, added a little extra chocolate, and was fired for stealing food. The matter is going to a tribunal.

The Lakeside tea gardens at Keswick in the lake district are reportedly under threat from an expansion of the next-door town theatre. The lease from the local council runs out next year, but it is reported that the theatre trust now holds the head lease on the site. The tea room can seat 240 customers; the theatre has attracted audiences of 130,000 people a year and contributes around £3 million a year to the local economy.

C2FFE
C3FFE
C7FFE
C8FFE
C9FFE
C12FFE

These coffee-related trade plates are for sale - we can't say who's selling them, but interested parties are invited to email the editor, and we'll put you in touch.

An interesting remark comes from Philip Lay of the Welsh brewer SA Brain, new owner of the Coffee#1 chain. He has commented on the difference between the pub trade and the café trade: "we quickly recognised that the cafe business offered an opportunity to move into a new sector that had great growth potential,... and how we could expand the business much quicker than pubs - the site criteria was clear, there was plenty of space on the high street, and new shops were nothing like as contentious as trying to get a new liquor licence. I can open a new coffee shop within about two months of identifying the site, creating about eight to ten jobs, but if I try to open a new pub creating about 15 to 16, it will certainly take six months and probably a year."

Interestingly, in the same regard, Coffee #1 has applied for permission to take over the former Next store in Bridgwater, where the local paper has observed that the chain has made the familiar move of applying for permission only as it comes to the end of its shopfitting work. Meanwhile, a petition has been handed into Cotswold council, protesting against the proposed opening of a Coffee#1 in Cirencester. Protestors say that in difficult trading times, councils should protect local independent businesses. Coffee #1 currently has 22 stores across the South West and Wales.

Aldwinckles coffee shop of Harborough has worked with the local branch of the White Stuff Foundation to raise funds to build a safe cycle route in the area, in memory of a local boy killed while cycling to school. The Foundation runs the annual National Wear a Tea Cosy On Your Head Day from which over eighty charities all around the country will benefit. Aldwinckles donated a percentage of money for every tea it sells, and donated tea and cakes for the Foundation to sell.

For the first time, Lavazza has awarded its first Gold Flag, which signifies a café showing an exceptional standard of operation, to a business outside Italy - one has gone to the Muse Café and Deli, of St Peter Port, Guernsey.

A man who runs a tea distributorship in his spare time has paid £25,000 for the vehicle licence TEA 1. Ravi Soni of Teas4U has told his local paper that he has already received an offer of £100,000 for the plate, but will not sell for under half a million pounds. (The items you see directly to the left are, we believe, not in that bracket!)

Lucia's Café in Cirencester is involved in a project to find forgotten cake recipes. The idea comes from an event marking UK Older Person's Day (October 1) and the idea is to publish them in a book. "Many older people might have great recipes, but not written them down," said one of the organisers.

More cafes under fire for access rules

The fraught matter of 'access' has arisen again, with three cases in which cafes have been criticised, although other operators might consider that one or two of the business owners were quite within their rights.

In the first case, a wheelchair-using man was allegedly refused access to a café-bar in Torquay on the grounds that he was 'a safety hazard'.

There is disagreement over the reasons, with the complainer saying that he wished to use the upstairs part of the premises, and that his able-bodied friends had offered to carry him up and down the stairs. The operator has responded that in an old building in which a lift cannot be installed, they were right to impose restrictions if a customer might be unable to readily reach an exit in an emergency.

Although the customer appears to have reluctantly accepted this, he has made the point that hospitality businesses should make their policies towards the disabled very clear.

Scottish TV has reported a row over a mother who was reportedly told to leave a Costa site, 'and never return', for feeding her disabled baby through a tube. The baby uses the tube to get air as he feeds, but a nearby customer allegedly complained to staff that the sound of it was putting her and her friend off their coffee.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission for Scotland said that it



No prams, no loos, no smoking, no dogs... a sign from Germany

would look at taking action. Costa reportedly later apologised.

A German coffee shop, the Barn Roastery in Berlin, has come in for international criticism after reportedly banning prams and baby-strollers. The café has something of a reputation for being 'purist', having allegedly also expressed dislike of customers who take sugar or milk in their coffee.

It has now blocked its entrance with a vertical barrier, giving no room for prams to pass - in response to protests, the café pointed out that it will readily remove the barrier to allow wheelchair users in, but in an interesting practical comment with which some operators may sympathise, he said: 'mothers are simply not my target market'.

One annoyed consumer called the café 'the hipster coffee place from hell'.

Cafe seating request sabotaged by mysterious bike racks

The latest case of a council against a café in regard to street furniture has taken several extremely strange turns, with local authority workmen at one point allegedly arriving overnight to sabotage a café's case.

The Pot Café in Cardiff has had tables and chairs outside for eleven years, and has recently been talking with the authorities about the renewal of its licence - the council said that it required a two-metre space between the edge of the chairs and the kerb, and the café owner confirmed that a three-metre leeway was available.

Then, on a Sunday night, two bike rails were erected on the pavement edge, reducing the available space to well under two metres, thus rendering the café's seating application useless. The same also happened to a nearby café.

Neighbouring businesses with no external requirement said they could have accommodated the bike rails if necessary, and supporters on Twitter expressed outrage, alleging that the installation was deliberate sabotage.

Owner Natalie Eddins told us: "we had a visitor from the council. He apologised for what he said was an unfortunate coincidence. He took photos and said they have re-opened the licence application, and now it's pending a decision."

The case then got a little stranger.

"Then I got a phone call from the council saying they were planning to uproot the rails and move them ten

yards to the left, pending permission from the shop next door.

"What's interesting is that the shop next door is being asked before this happens, whereas we weren't!"

In Chorley, Lancs, the council says it is to develop its café policy 'to encourage a café culture, given the limitations of our weather, and in a way that is monitored and not abused'. A councillor has spoken of the huge opportunity in the town to create external areas, but that they need to be managed in a way which is 'without silly fees and not restrictive'.

In Evesham, councillors have been told that 'rejecting outside seating will be like going back to the dark ages for Evesham', and that 'we have to do something about a café society - and that doesn't happen without outside tables and chairs'.

A new twin business is the Brooklyn pottery and coffee shop in Stockport, started by Vicky Smith. The idea is that customers can paint pottery in the café studio, or exhibit their own artwork. "People think they can't display their work because they aren't a professional," says Vicky. "This gives them a chance to start out."



External signs of status are important, says BSA

During an extremely busy month for trade awards, five businesses have won the right to put the Beverage Standards Association's 'five-cup' sign in their window, and that trade association has said that for all the credit rightly involved in winning its individual 'best drink' awards, it is the cup sign on the door which brings more long-term benefit to a café.

The BSA has two parts to its award - one allows cafes to compete for a title of 'best latte' or similar, and the other is a window sign which confirms that the outlet has been judged to meet a certain general standard of beverage preparation and service.

In an extremely candid comment, BSA chief executive Martyn Herriott told *Coffee House*: "working towards a customer service and general 'accreditation' is probably more important, for long-term benefit, than a 'best drink' prize. Best drinks don't bring lots of people in - consistency of quality and customer service does.

"What we have seen this year is a chasm between the 'very good' and 'the rest', although many who are already producing good drinks could upgrade very quickly.

"We have seen an improvement in customer service, which delights us, because the independent industry is fighting an uphill battle against a lot of very big operators with doubtful service and doubtful ethics. We're working strongly towards explaining the benefits of service."

Five businesses have won the right to put the BSA's 'five-cup' sign in their window - Pumphrey's of Newcastle, Spring Espresso of York, Coffee Fix of Gatley, Tea Monkey of Milton Keynes and Cafelicious of Swindon.

Several of those names cropped up also in the 'best drink' winners - Cafelicious took 'best hot chocolate', Spring Espresso had the best latte, and Pumphrey's and Coffee Fix shared the title for the best espresso. Eteaket of Edinburgh was 'best tea', Silvio's of London was 'best flat white', and the prize for the best cappuccino went to a Café 2U mobile franchisee in Merton... notably, that is a 'best drink' going to a cup made in the open air. We believe that around 90 cafes were judged.

Notably, remarked the BSA, there has been a move towards higher quality in chocolate. Barry Cook of Cafelicious in Swindon, who took that prize, told *Coffee House*:

"We have recently started using



Eteaket in Edinburgh, a BSA award winner, is the latest British tea-room to be descended upon by Japanese film makers.

Kokoa Collection, and we prepare it slightly different than recommended, as we melt the chocolate discs into a small amount of milk, whisk together, pour into the cup, then add more steamed milk to fill the cup whilst creating latte art on it. We are not pushing extra trimmings any more as they do not do good chocolate any justice.

"Chocolate is now selling so well that I had to put a panic order in after our local paper printed details of our award win and everyone came flooding in for it - I've only sold more chocolate in a day once before."

Elsewhere, the contract roaster Lincoln and York came up with its own Coffee Shop of the Year award, in which cafes were nominated by its trade distributors, and all the drinks featured the roaster's coffee.

From 65 venues nominated, the title went to the Watermark Cafe in Scarborough, and three venues were named as runners-up - Henri, of Edinburgh, the Fresh Food Deli in Pocklington, East Yorkshire, and the Coffee Hub in Manchester. An interesting practical prize was that the finalists all won two places on the roaster's City & Guilds Level 2 Barista Course.

"The competition was all about the coffee," L&Y's James Sweeting told us. "The entrants all had to serve an espresso, cappuccino and flat white simultaneously, with no advance notice whatsoever."

There is a delightfully patriotic element to the new company to be formed by Ryan Hogan, formerly of Fracino - Espresso Associates of Birmingham will be 'dedicated to championing the best in the British coffee industry, from our bespoke machines to British-roasted coffees'. That means that the machines and grinders it sells are by Fracino, and the coffee will be from Drury, the first company to roast a British espresso blend. The company was very nearly called The British Coffee Company, which has now become a tag line, and Ryan Hogan says that the first reactions to his patriotic attitude are favourable. Adrian Maxwell, MD of Fracino, told us: "giving start-up businesses a leg up the ladder helps to stimulate trade, which is exactly what the economy needs right now."

Vogue magazine now has its own coffee lounge, to open in Dubai, where luxury fashion labels are extremely common in retail malls.

A gastropub in London has devised the Bradley Yoggins breakfast, to commemorate the British cycling medal in the Olympics - it consists of a creamy coconut Greek yoghurt with a quinoa crunch, fresh raspberries and roasted beetroot, and is priced at £4. The well-known cyclists' coffee-house in London, Look Mum, No Hands, tells us they do something similar - "you can cycle 50 miles on one bowl of our home-made muesli!"

Yet again, Starbucks has offended the Chinese - this time, the brand had to re-name a new outlet near one of

Buddhism's most famous temples after what critics called a 'cultural invasion'. The site had opened as the Lingyin Temple Starbucks, which made some people think it was located inside the temple, a very offensive idea - however, Starbucks said that the café was actually about 20 minutes' walk from the temple, but agreed to change the name to Lingyin Starbucks. In 2009, the chain was more or less forced out of the Forbidden City in Beijing, after state television commented on it 'trampling on Chinese culture'.

It is often said that baristas in the cool and hip venues are, to be frank, scruffy - but that was turned around last month in Toronto when baristas at the Sam James coffee shop reversed the usual concept of 'dress-down Friday'. On the same day, every barista worked in sharp suits and skinny ties, which came as a contrast to their customer base of corporate types, who all came in dressed down! The most interesting thing was the reaction from customers - "they were definitely friendlier and more engaging", said one barista. However, he noted, the dry-cleaning bill would be immense.

A coffee cart business to give employment for people with learning difficulties has opened in Whitby. Creative Coffee uses a three-wheeler and will visit specified locations, with experienced support staff always on hand. It is expected that 28 people will benefit over the course of the next couple of years.

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The winner of the British smoothie contest, run by the Lunch show and sponsored by Magrini (distributor of Vitamix blenders) is Jamal Houssien of Shake My Shake from Crouch End.

He was a finalist last year, and won this time with Tropical Rainforest, a mixture of fresh tropical fruit juices, diced mango, coconut, banana, and frozen yogurt. The distinctive feature of his drink, he tells us, is that this is a smoothie in which all of the flavours can be identified.

"With most smoothies, you really don't taste all of the ingredients once made because some fruits overpower other fruits," Jamal told us. "With our smoothie you truly taste all of the flavours. We made this drink when we were in the Amazon in Brazil, from the fruits we had around us... but no frozen yogurt!"

"Back in the UK, it has been our biggest seller, from £2.85 for a regular size and £4.35 for extra-large."

What is the next step for Clipper Teas? This pioneer brand in ethical trading has now been bought by a significant European natural foods company – and a move towards the cafe trade might be on the cards.

Clipper has always considered itself a 'different' brand - it was started in 1984 with two chests of single-origin Assam tea, it launched the first Fairtrade tea ten years later, and has always promoted itself as being "natural, fair and delicious".

It has appeared extremely widely in natural food shops and the like, and had sales of £16 million last year. In 2007 it was sold to Flemish investment bankers, for a reported £30 million, and six months ago was bought by the Dutch natural foods group Wessanen for what is reported to have been £50 million. Wessanen, which also owns brands such as Whole Earth and Kallo, is now to invest a million pounds in it.

But what is the state of Clipper, and what is its importance to the British foodservice and catering sector? Although recent turnover was good, last year's overall figures were not. How healthy a company did Wessanen take on?

"A year back Clipper had certainly hit a pothole in the road," agrees Patrick Cairns, chief executive of the UK arm of Wessanen. "They had lost a couple of big listings, and clearly, it had been a business with an overhead too big, and the profitability was not there. A drive for volume in such a small business is not always good.

"But by the time we came in, they were showing momentum on the way back. A Nielsen report had said it was a brand with strong growth in everyday tea, in a market in decline, and when we took it over, we did see this growth and increased market penetration. Six months in, it seems to us that we do have strong movement.

"Clipper now is about economies of scale on a more realistic footing. The investment is in a pretty fundamental overhaul of a factory built up over time... it's a converted vacuum-cleaner factory across lots of different buildings, and it needs refurbishment! One thing needed is capacity for more tea, a second is efficiency, and a third thing is better staff facilities."

Wessanen has spoken of its 'huge ambitions' for Clipper - but where? The brand has always had an appearance in retail, without making much noise in the foodservice sector... by contrast, the other 'ethical' brands all say that the coffee-house sector is their next big target area.

Clipper - turning into a serious brand for cafes?



Patrick Cairns (second from left) demonstrates to Clipper's operations director Mark Bagwell and Gillian Summers of West Dorset District Council. Below, a Clipper logo - a fluffy image or a serious one?

“ The question now is of how a tea brand can deliver a superior taste instead of just being 'fluffy'... this is not a novelty brand! ”

- Patrick Cairns



The Clipper website still doesn't seem very enthusiastic about the foodservice sector, with a fairly drab page on a dozen trade distributors... although, to be fair, there are two very serious coffee companies in that list. Do Wessanen's ambitions for Clipper include the serious cafe trade?

"We feel the brand can be attractive here, and that we can do it well. This is something we do have to work on and we have to look at our product offering to see what fits.

"Hotels and transport are already significant customers for us, as are the House of Commons, Eurostar, and universities, and our job is to actively develop this."

How will Clipper be viewed by the public in this?

The highest-profile part of the tea market at present is the emerging number of new 'boutique' tea brands, although many of them do seem very much the same, being rather feminine and gushy. Clipper itself, it may be said, may have begun in the same way, and may have been caught up in 'boutique-ness' by the newcomers.

By contrast, certain of the massive brands remain relatively stodgy. Where will Clipper position itself?

The aim appears to be a slight shift out of the 'quirky' sector into the mainstream, yet being seen to be more lively than the giants.

"Tea is a market where you can build up a small business quite quickly because the barriers to entry are quite low," Patrick Cairns points out. "We are looking to build ourselves up as a mainstream player, as a 'challenger' brand, not part of the establishment, but one which is ready to do new things in new ways.

"The feeling people have about us is that we're not formal or stuffy... we're accessible. So we shall present ourselves as 'premium' in a modern way, a

premium brand with informality."

How will Clipper put itself across to be seen this way? As a brand, Clipper has been remarkably reticent – is it going to shout about itself a bit more?

"It is a brand which has been understated, and which should be a little louder," agrees Patrick Cairns. "But our focus will be on taste, not about being different for the sake of it, and our momentum will come from people trying our products and wanting to try them again.

"This will not be just an image-led brand."

What will this mean for product development? Certain main tea brands have been following themselves around in circles for the past few years, most notably in the matter of fruit and herbal infusions and chais. Clipper always claims to have been at the forefront of introducing new products, although one main brand has made the disparaging comment: 'you always know when you've got a good idea - Clipper will copy it!'

Does Clipper have product development opportunities which will make it stand apart from the crowd?

"We believe a big opportunity lies in the quality of green tea. We think there is a huge difference in the quality of greens on the market, and this is a sector in which the difference is very much in the tea itself.

"In everyday tea, we also see an opportunity to uptrade the consumers. We think the development at the top end of the market, for customers who are prepared to spend on quality tea, is a great one for Clipper.

"But how we do it will be a matter of taste, not just of image. The question for Clipper now is of how a tea brand can deliver a superior taste instead of just being 'fluffy'... this is not a novelty brand!"

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Beyond the gingerbread this year?

The Christmas menu can become too obvious – the gingerbread latte still outsells everything else in December, but several suppliers are now offering alternative ideas for this season.

An original suggestion comes from the English Cheesecake Company, which has devised the 'next generation' of its product - Cupcake Minis, which combine cheesecake with light vanilla or chocolate sponge cake. They are supplied frozen.

"Instead of the pudding, many people want something completely different and refreshing at the end of a Christmas meal," company founder Phillip Weldon told us. "A luxury cheesecake completes the meal properly as 'indulgent', but this is a contemporary twist."

Union Hand-Roasted will have its Winter Blend available right through to February. It is suitable for both espresso and filter, and the brand encourages cafes to list it as a 'now serving...' guest coffee. There is a certain 'essence of candied fruit' and a butter-scotch aftertaste, the roasters tell us. And, says Union, it works in a gingerbread latte, too!

In spite of the dominance of gingerbread, even the flavour brands have other ideas. At Da Vinci, brand manager Grace Keenan suggests that good winter options would be butterscotch, Irish cream, and peppermint. Do not,



The English Cheesecake Co's new mini cakes

she says, forget the flavoured seasonal hot chocolate menu - orange or almond will work well.

Chocolate hazelnut sauce combined with chestnut syrup gives the right rich, nutty feel for a winter drink, says James Coston at Monin. And remember the option of a light colour - Black Forest syrup with white chocolate sauce makes the winter special look different.

The same goes for cake, says Simon Law at the Handmade Cake Company. "Try a cake that isn't brown! Our white chocolate and cranberry tiffin works, or try a twist on the mince pie - our apple and mincemeat crumble slice becomes your 'Christmas slice'."

Beyond the Bean has its Christmas Box of products ready - eggnog syrup, toffee-apple syrup, gingerbread and point-of-sale material.

"The two big chains replicate what each other is doing, others follow them, and the seasonal line becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy," says the company.

"But independents are more flexible - you can react to weather and change menu quicker than the chains can.

"We have introduced eggnog, which is brandy-based, so we've had to replicate the alcohol, and the rest is nutmeg and vanilla and so on. It has to be a milky drink, so it works well as a latte.

"Our seasonal Byron Bay Cookie is the same as the last winter one - dark chocolate orange. This is because the demand took us by surprise, and people have been asking for it. Rather than just stick it in the jar, you can do things with it - offer it as a drink-link promotion, or blend it as a hot shake!"

Several flavour brands have Christmas syrups - Taylersons did well with its Christmas cake one last year - and the new flavoured coffee range from Smiths now includes a Christmas Pudding one - essentially brandy-ish with orange and spices.

And what is really astonishing this year is the arrival of not one, but two, Christmas ice-cream flavours. Both New Forest and Beechdean have introduced mince-pie ice-cream.

Combine things, says Phillip Weldon the cheesecake man. "Our mince pie cheesecake is designed not to be over-sweet - but our Strawberries and Queen cheesecake would be the perfect complement to mince pie ice cream." (Details: 020 8964 9556 or www.englishcheesecake.com).

In a rather curious statement, Starbucks' president of European operations has said that the brand has to 'reintroduce' itself to Europe. The brand's latest quarter results show worldwide revenue of over three billion dollars and 20 per cent growth - but it continues not to perform as well as expected in some parts of the world, and has now spoken of having to work harder to become a 'loved' brand in Europe.

A million pounds is going into the building of a filling station and Starbucks drive-thru at March Green, Wigan, due to open in November. EuroGarage, the UK's biggest petrol station operator, is putting a supermarket and sandwich bar on the same site, to transform what the local press has called 'the latest phase of embracing a cafe society that seemed a world away when heavy industry ruled Wigan'.

A tea shop in Devon is involved in the latest incarnation of the 'calendar girls' phenomenon. The Great British Tea Shop, in Ilfracombe, handled the promotional photographs for a local dramatic group which is putting on the now-famous play. The tea shop owner Jane Perrin is also a photographer, and when invited to do the job decided that her own premises, and the availability of a few bottles of wine, would help the cast overcome their nervousness. She has observed that nudity is not obligatory for all her customers.

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By the light of the moka pot...

This curiosity comes from the Italian designer Lamponi, which has made a name with the unusual strategy of turning vintage items into household lamps - in the past, they have used parts of both Lambretta and Vespa scooters. The latest idea is the moka lamp, in which a bulb is inserted in the bottom of the coffee maker and wings, made of polished brass, are attached. There is a choice of fixed or flexible stem, and the results sell for between 210 and 260 euros.



One of the classic techniques of the hotel tea lounge is back in favour with tea-rooms and coffee-houses - Drury reports a rise in popularity for its tea display boxes, so that tea can be 'offered' instead of sold from a menu. "It's the waft of flavour which the customers like," says the company.

Unique coastal tea-room on the market

A riverside café which actually warrants the description 'unique' is being offered on a ten-year lease - it is Smugglers Cottage at Tolverne, near Falmouth in Cornwall, which is available for what the owners call 'the first time in living memory'. One of the features of the business is that it is part of the Tregothnan estate, which is of course the site of the only commercial tea plantation in the UK. It follows that the successful operator will have the reflected glory of working with Britain's only home-grown tea brand.

There are only two ways to approach Smugglers - one is by a lane through one of Cornwall's most picturesque areas, and a great many customers arrive by boat, as it is one of the most popular cruise destinations in the area, up a scenic creek.

The main part of the property is a 15th-century cottage, once popular among the locals for an entirely different reason - it was the landing-place for contraband which were brought in by sea-going vessels which could get right up the extremely deep creek to unload.

The café has been known as a tourist spot for many years, but most recently it has become known as the tea-room



which is part of Britain's only commercial tea plantation.

It is part of the estate of the Boscawen family, which holds the title of Lord Falmouth, and is a private botanical garden of vast importance - it is an official 'safe site' for the keeping of rare or endangered trees from all over the world.

It was under gardener Jonathan Jones that experiments were made to cultivate tea in sufficient quantity to sell - the first 'English tea' was sold to Fortnum and Mason in 2005, and it is now a very popular, and quite expensive, product.

The estate has recently refurbished and re-equipped the tea-room, which now has restaurant, bar, tearoom and barbecue facilities together with terracing to hold around 200 people, and increased car parking... and increased boat-mooring facilities as well.

The closing date for expressions of interest and proposals for the site on a new ten-year lease is 31st October. Details from Jonathon Jones on 01872 520000 or jjones@tregothnan.co.uk

Custom cups now outsell stock, says Vegware

Vegware, the maker of compostable takeaway cups and tableware, has devised a new division to concentrate on short runs of imaginative kinds of personalised cup. The new www.print-mycup.co.uk is also going to offer fast turn-around times.

"We now sell more custom-printed cups than stock cups," the company's Lucy Frankel told us. "In an ever-more crowded market, more operators see the value of branded beverages."

The special effects offered include embossing, foil stamping and tear-off tabs (pictured), which offer the chance of turning a cup into a lottery ticket or voucher.



Does this prize look familiar? It's the image of the World Barista Championship trophy - but it isn't. It's the Caffe Ritazza world barista trophy, in which, curiously, the top three places were taken by baristas working at rail station branches - Copenhagen, Stockholm, and in third place, Tomas Bruckus from UK Rail, London. The trophy was indeed supplied by Reg Barber, the internationally-famous maker of espresso tampers, who also supplies the WBC prize. There was a special Monin-sponsored prize for a signature drink. This went to Laura Timpany from the Caffe Ritazza at Glasgow airport, who entered the UK barista championships last year. Her drink was an espresso, infused with berry and chocolate flavours, served in a shot glass.



Best-cafe award judged by pop-up format

For the first time, there has been an attempt to recognise a 'best coffee house' in the entire American nation.

The contest was held by the CoffeeFest show with the sponsorship of Da Vinci syrups, and it featured some unusual aspects, as a way of judging entrants from across the USA. Initial entries were by nomination, and a shortlist of 20 were invited to submit a video about their business - but at the same time, they underwent 'mystery shopper' judging.

The top eight cafes were then invited to operate a pop-up coffee house at the show, fulfilling certain conditions - they had 30 minutes to meet various drinks requests, but were judged in everything from how they set up the coffee shop to the way they cleaned up afterwards.

The winner was Klatch Coffee, of California, which is run by the family of Heather Perry, twice the American barista champion.

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How much of a coffee shop's coffee is wasted by the grinder?

It is a question which has arisen before, with the Ceado brand arguing vociferously that the amount of coffee sprayed around a worktop can, over the course of time, add up to an appreciable cost for a café.

There has also been the question of 'clumping', the delightful term which means that grounds stick together as they come to the brewing point, with clear disadvantages in the result.

To this has now been added the interesting question of 'retention'. And it is not the manufacturers who are arguing this as a marketing argument – it has come up from a highly-respected coffee shop, Taylor Street Baristas.

"Our grinders retain approximately 55gm of coffee, so if the grinder is idle for ten minutes, that's three double espressos' worth of stale coffee," says the company. "In addition to this, when you adjust the grind and discard the previous ground coffee, you are throwing away 55gm of coffee. This is all expense that we could do without.

"We are happy to pay for the best coffee, but it is a shame to be throwing so much away. Grinder makers would do well to look at a way to make their machines more efficient."

It is an issue which causes argument over grind-on-demand grinders, which have become popular in recent years.

One of the major arguments for grind-on-demand is of freshness, because the beans are ground at the point of use, and no wastage, because the amount ground is set to the exact amount required.

As the La Spaziale brand explained when promoting the system a good six years ago: "As we grind the bean, we expose all the flavours that we are aiming to get into the cup. We release the aromas, and the more of those volatile aromas that end up in the air, the less we get in the cup. At the same time, a complex chain of reactions occurs, creating staleness very quickly."



One of these Ceados had the anti-static control on, and one did not.

Grinders and the wasting of coffee

Prior to grind-on-demand, grinders had a circle of little plastic buckets holding ground coffee. This is where coffee could go stale quickly.

The solution was 'grind on demand', with the grounds delivered straight from the grinding burrs to the brewing basket, with the promise of accurate quantity every time.

However, it is this which has now raised the question of 'retention'. Retention occurs, say Taylor Street, 'because conical burr grinders retain too much coffee around their burrs'.

Is this important?

"Tolley is right - it is an issue," says Marco Olmi of the Coffee Machine Company, distributing Ceado grinders. "The difference is between flat burrs and conical burrs, and both are available in grind-on-demand machines.

"To my knowledge, no conical-burr

grinder avoids 'retention'. Conical burrs cannot deliver straight down the chute. So the coffee goes into a little chamber and displaces what is already there. The 'retention' is what is held between the burrs and the top of the chute."

This only seems to happen with conical burr grinders.

"In flat burrs, the coffee goes straight down the chute," says Olmi. "So - why not go for a flat-burr grinder? Because conical burrs grind slower, though still 18gm in three or four seconds, but no burned coffee from heat. They also deliver a different-shaped particle, more rounded and giving more uniformity of extraction."

There may be two reasons for retention. One is the design of the conical principle, and the other is static, which is why Ceado has developed an anti-static facility. Marco Olmi has recently

conducted tests leading to a spreadsheet of results showing how static affects the delivery of coffee.

Ceado's SCC, the 'static and anti-clumping control' has aroused a lot of interest. When coffee particles fly, static makes them attract and 'clump' together, or repel, which gives a fan shape as the grounds fly out.

Anti-static design claims to avoid both, and dispenses coffee in an organised direction, avoiding waste. (At a recent trade show, a competitor actually tried to take the machine apart overnight in an attempt to find out how it worked!)

"I have run data on the new Ceado E37S," reports Olmi. "I ran a series of shots through the grinder, a third of them with no anti-static control on, the next third with it on at 20 per cent, and a final third with the anti-static fully on.

"The deviation within the shots (the difference between the heaviest shot and the lightest) is halved with the anti-static control full on - this means that accuracy and consistency of shot is maintained by controlling static.

"What surprised me the most was the waste issue. Wastage is over seven times worse with the anti-static control off... wastage with the anti-static control full on is practically non-existent.

"The retention figure, with the anti-static on, was stunningly better."

Olmi did add the provisos that his research was not done in the 'real' conditions of a coffee shop environment under time pressure, and that the sample was, statistically speaking, very small.

Other companies have now spoken on the issue.

"Limiting retention is important for us," says Ed Gooding at Mahlkoenig.

"It's important to know the retention of the grinder being used. There are two reasons – when the barista adjusts the grind, the retained grounds will need to be cleared before the next shot is pulled. The second reason is down to quality – the very best baristas purge the grinder before each shot, to remove 'stale' grounds, but this practice will waste a lot of coffee.

"As a manufacturer, we want a perfect grinder, with zero retention, 100 per cent accurate dosing, and the perfect grind profile. We continue to strive for such perfection, although it is important to be commercially viable as well... unfortunately, that often drives the decisions made."

Why is this a matter for the coffee shop to think about?

"We now see a trend for bigger grammages in the basket, which is fine," says Marco Olmi for Ceado. "But if you're using a dose of 20gm, why waste five grammes of it?

"Here is your judgment call - will you grind slightly slower, for better quality, less heat, and a better shape, and less waste? And for you, is it a problem that coffee might be even one stage older? "



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In praise of practicality...

What really is the difference between espresso machine technologies? It is a puzzle which faces many café operators who are not at the 'geek' end of the business – for every one who understands the new higher-tech features on offer, there are probably forty or fifty who just want something reliable from which they can produce a decent espresso.

"I sympathise," remarks Chris Austin at Conti. "Technology is taking over our industry, and I see marketing divisions focusing heavily on technology, while I wonder how many operators actually understand what they are being sold, and even more worrying, will they ever use it?"

"Once we lift the lid on traditional machines they all look pretty similar – the basic principle of espresso hasn't changed for years."

What is useful, he suggests, is understanding the principle of how greater control at the dispense end will actually help you serve a better drink.

"We cannot ignore the benefits to coffee quality that these features bring – unfortunately, most are beyond the budget of the average coffee shop owner. So we have taken the principles and simplified the technology to improve performance while keeping the budget realistic.

"Our TCI system stands for Temperature Control Improvement, and allows the user to adjust group head temperature by a small easy-to-adjust tap. It basically achieves what a multi-boiler machine does, allowing the barista to fine-tune the water temperature, but with less trickery and expense."

Conti also has new thinner steam arms, and new lever steam controls.

"The arms have been tweaked to help the barista control the flow of steam to allow more time to achieve perfect milk temperature and texture. This is very evident when the barista is using small milk pitchers. Our new 'paddle' steam control is far easier to use in practice than a twisty knob – up is on, down is off, and a push will purge the wand of old milk. It is spring-loaded so it then returns itself to ready position."

Elsewhere, Caffe Society of Leeds, once the importers of Brasilia until that famous brand went down, is now enthusiastic about its HLF machines.

"You might think that the HLF Vittoria is not so different from the other half-dozen brands who allow you to set the groups independently," remarks the company's Steve Mooring. "The difference is that our machine is half the price, or thereabouts! We're selling more of it than we did of the Brasilia Sublima.

"Brasilia was a two-month hiccup, but we had already been looking around. HLF were making a variant of this machine, which had been around for a couple of years in Australia and America. We changed it around a bit."

The result, he argues, is 'the most cost-effective true multi-boiler system available today'.



The HLF Vittoria

"It is a true multi-boiler system with separate hot water on each group for coffee brewing and a steam boiler for cappuccino and latte. Individual group head controls mean that each head can have a different set of parameters.

"Controlled pre-infusion and infusion, married to programmed dosage of water for each shot, enables an operator to really get the best from a coffee. It makes a real difference to the flavour profile of your bean."

The effect of machines allowing more precise temperature control is having an effect at high-street level, says Andrew Tucker of San Remo.

"It is interesting that with 35 per cent of footfall in coffee shops reportedly driven by coffee quality, it does appear that temperature-controlled machines like the San Remo TCS are increasing in sales.



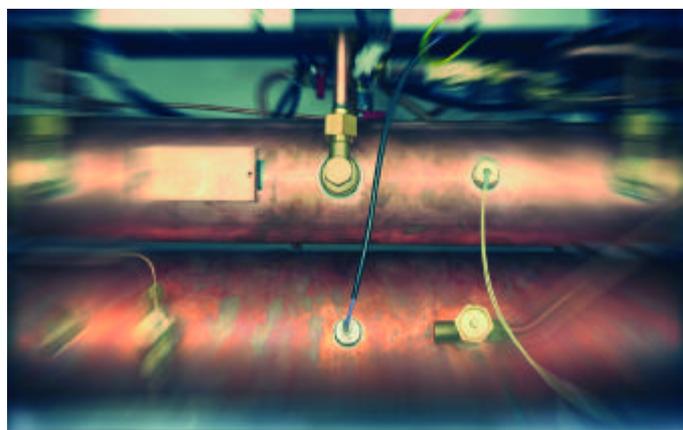
The San Remo Zoe

"The feedback we receive supports the notion that operators are making more decisions based on ensuring competitive strength – that is, there is little point in opening and not trying to be better in every respect than your competitors. It stands to reason that a machine that helps deliver better and more consistent coffee more easily will appeal to business-minded coffee shop owners."

This brings in the recently much-quoted value of choosing the 'work-horse' machine against the 'big-brand-for-the-sake-of-the-label' purchase.

"We have seen a clear polarisation of purchasing behaviour between the higher-end machines and the sturdy workhorse units," agrees Tucker. "In response to this San Remo have introduced the Zoe, a super-sturdy machine retaining a coffee output which will make many higher-priced machines pale.

"It's not at the lowest end in price – but close enough to already be selling in surprising numbers."



The new Iberital Expression with two boilers: a top of the range barista machine that won't break the bank...

The two-boiler machine has long been the barista's choice and not without good reason, too. The demands of today's busy coffee shops – espresso production and the production of steam for milk – often leave a bitter taste in the mouth, quite literally. The problem has always been the cost, with two-boiler machines typically costing double that of their traditional counterparts. Now Iberital in Barcelona have added the two-boiler Expression machine to their portfolio with a price tag which finally makes this technology an affordable option for many more coffee shops.

So what's the big difference between one and two-boiler machines? A working espresso machine is used to brew coffee and to produce steam to froth milk. With a one-boiler machine, when the demand for frothed milk is high, the increased steam output can lead to temperature fluctuations. These fluctuations can impact upon the quality of espresso the machine produces, leading to complaints of a "bitter" aftertaste. In a two-boiler machine the brewing group and the steam are controlled independently, guaranteeing the optimum espresso every time and allowing for the production of steam essential for cappuccinos, lattes, etc.

The Iberital two-boiler Expression is a top of the range, contemporary espresso machine with an affordable price tag. Available in 5 different colourways and with digital display technology. To find out more contact Jaguar Espresso Systems to be put in touch with your local distributor.



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The progress of super-automatic machines remains impressive, and an interesting statistic which has cropped up is of their dominance in Switzerland, where many of the very best super-autos are made. In that country, it was found that of 27,000 hospitality sites serving espresso drinks, 24,500 used super-autos.

All manufacturers now offer increasing menus of drinks, and our readers may recall a recent interview with Melitta, who suggested that auto machines are now of such a high standard that the very best coffees can be used in them.

However, something that makers have not spoken about so much is whether the same should go for chocolate. A drink which offers great contrasts in the trade is the mocha – one café's mocha can be smooth, creamy, and balanced, and the next café can serve something sharp, thin, and taste of nothing but heat.

How does this serve as a test for fully-automatic machines?

"According to Rex Royal, the thing about automatic machines in Switzerland is because of labour costs," remarks Roy Grey at Capital Coffee. "They say that for nice coffee, you need either the labour or the machine - and there's a very high labour cost in Switzerland, so they have gone down the machine route, and they have gone down it so far that you can now adjust an automatic machine just as much as you can a traditional espresso machine.

"We have had success in this with a

Fully-autos and the art of the mocha



The Rex Royal SCS Power

midway machine, the Rex Royal SCS Power, which was initially intended to be a budget machine for the Far East, until the American market wanted it to be a no-nonsense machine which could handle a 24oz Americano!

"Now, you get a lot of pretty bad Americanos served from a traditional machine, because people don't take care over the water temperature, but if you set this machine up well, you avoid the thin, insipid, acrid Americano that you often get served by a barista.

"With a carefully set-up automatic, you can now have an Americano to be as close to a good filter coffee as you can get... certainly far superior to the average hand-made one."

The same goes for mocha, he says.

"It all comes down to the quality of ingredients and the set-up. The variants are there, and it is up to you to decide whether you want to serve a

really good chocolate powder, instead of a cheap and cheerful one, or a chocolate syrup in the cup, or a liquid chocolate? And you can have whatever layers you want, if you tell it.

"It is always the same point – take the time to test what you want to have as your best drink, and then make sure it is set up properly to do that.

"We have had a lot of success with places who have found that if they take the trouble over the ingredients and set-up, then they get a quality which has the effect of putting sales up."

Are operators using the adjustments to the full?

"Probably not, and the reason is because many machines are bought from one supplier, the coffee from another, and is set up by an engineer who doesn't know the coffee. Renting your machine from a coffee supplier makes good sense – if your coffee supplier can't do it, find one who does!"

It is perfectly true that you can get a better Americano from an automatic than from a barista, agrees Steve Mooring of Caffè Society. The difference in today's market is between the 'everyday' high street barista and the central London standard.

"There are half a dozen very good machines which make a 'reasonable to very good' coffee, if not in the same league as a world champion," says Mooring. "For the everyday high street, if you forget about the standard of cafes in Soho, so long as the quality of the coffee is good, and so long as you put a big emphasis on the cleanliness of the machine, you can generally argue that you have the equivalent to barista coffee. Some people use a vending machine chocolate which mixes with water into the espresso, and still get a better mocha than you would from a poor barista!"

It is all down to set-up, he agrees.

"Your biggest problem comes when you get a machine from a supplier who doesn't supply your ingredients... they set up the machine without proper tasting, which is a joke.

"We will set up a machine as 'average' in the workshop, and fine-tune on installation. This brings in an important thing about bean-to-cup machines – the installation is not 'it'. These are not vending machines which you never have to touch again... they need fine tuning and cleaning, because you're working with an oily bean and milk, which are changeable products."

There is no reason why a fully-auto should not dispense a 'luxury' mocha, argues Simon Bracken of Scanomat.

"We launched the Top Brewer some time ago" (that's the one in which the bean-to-cup brewer is hidden under the worktop and only the spout and control pad is visible). "It comes with an optional chocolate module, using a

premium liquid-based chocolate that can be dispensed hot or cold.

"The interesting observation we have made is how many operators now use it with our iPhone app to tailor-make drinks. They can now set up an automatic machine for a custom mocha with exactly the right chocolate, exactly the right milk, and the most amazing espresso.

"We have had 710,000 hits on our video about this!"

This, says Roger Shuttleworth of the Jura brand, is why we now have what might seem the odd situation of a fully-automatic machine with a recipe guide.

"In practice, there are now dozens of things you can do to create your own speciality coffee. We have a menu of over 30 drinks that you can assemble using the Jura Giga – just like cocktails, you can create your own personalised variants of coffee classics."

And the machines are now far more user-friendly, say the brands.

The newest one from WMF is the 1200S entry-level machine. With a small footprint and a daily usage of around a hundred cups, this is intended to 'open up the quality coffee market to many more places out of home'.

"We wanted a machine that offered the benefits without the complexities of the larger machines," explained WMF's Florian Lehmann. "Even where sited in a self-service environment, it is now easier for the smaller operator to take advantage of all the options a bean-to-cup can do."

And even without being plumbed in, points out Bravor, as in the case of the Rex Royal S200. Such a small machine can now use fresh milk or powdered milk, and be positioned somewhere where there is no water supply. "It turns out to be true greatness in a small size," says Bravor. "The individually adjustable brewing pressure and variable grinder mean you can still have your coffee beverages exactly how you want them."

A liking for Rex Royal is of course shared by Roy Grey, at Capital Coffee, who laughs about the standard habit of manufacturers claiming menus of vast numbers of possible drinks. The real value, he says, is a well-judged and well set-up menu of the ones you can realistically sell.

"I like fully-autos. I've been doing them since 1989, and supplied what I think may have been the first one-touch cappuccino machine. Although some of the early ones were complete nightmares, today they have a great future, for what they enable.

"Manufacturers think it's a big 'plus' to say their machine can handle two hundred different drinks, but what the trade wants is simplicity!

"Realistically, you may struggle to come up with twelve options which are usable. What you have to do is select the ones that work for you – and then keep the machine set up to make them perfectly, the way you want them made."





A punk siphon from America

This is one of the year's more curious inventions, and indeed one of the most curiously named. The word Steampunk is 'a literary genre, a subgenre of science fiction and fantasy', but not surprisingly, the word has been adopted by several coffee-related companies.

In this case, the Steampunk single-cup brewing system by Khristian Bombeck of Alpha Dominche is a very curious combination of siphon machine and cafetiere, with a little water agitation thrown in... 'a new category of post-espresso beverage brewing', as the Americans put it. It was exhibited at the American trade show earlier this year.

Ground coffee, or tea, is placed in an upper brewing 'crucible'. Steam and hot water are controlled for temperature and volume, and reach the upper chamber as in a siphon machine, and are agitated. This is perfectly visible, in view of the customer. The brewed liquor then returns to the lower chamber, where it is dispensed into the cup.

Four brewing chambers can be in use at once, each controlled by a touch-pad (inset).

The Presso's new name



We have reported on this machine before, but it has a new name. What was Presso is now the ROK - it is a hand-operated coffee press machine with handles on both sides, and the operating action is very similar to those wine bottle openers where you press two handles down at the same time. The designer, Patrick Hunt, says he has now upgraded the original design in several ways, including higher-grade material in the brewing works, which he says is now 'virtually indestructible', and a firmer grip for the machine on a worktop. It has a 10-year guarantee, and the price is £129.

No need for Clooney, says DE

This machine was apparently devised some time ago by Sara Lee, but was in mothballs until the new spin-off company DE Master Blenders 1753 was formed (Douwe Egberts, as was). The Sarista is a development of the Senseo, the partnership with Philips which produced a very good domestic machine using espresso pods. This one brews from roasted beans vacuum-sealed in canisters that the company calls bean-funnels. The funnels are interchangeable with each other, to allow for variety, but so far as we can see, the user is tied in to using beans supplied this way. Although the machine is aimed at the same general market as Nespresso, the company has said that they won't try the same kind of George Clooney celebrity promotion: 'he's getting a bit old!' said the company boss.





they're here...



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South London is very different from north London... south of the river, the feel is different, the architecture is different, and attitudes are different. And there are very few attitudes more different than that of Street Coffee.

On the way down Bermondsey Road, under the railway arches, is a boxing gym, with the curious offer of 'white-collar boxing'. It's fitness training for desk-bound types, apparently. They do things differently down here.

A little farther down is the flagship of Street Coffee, one of its three sites in London (two north of the river, one south). And here they certainly do things very differently.

There are posters of Barry Manilow, Abba, on the walls, and curiously, one of Stalin. Notably, this is not one of the many autographed ones, although you wouldn't put it past the owner. A vast community notice board, lampshades made from takeaway coffee cups, leather sofas with Union Jack cushions very prominent, a couple of standard lamps with frilly lampshades which would have looked perfectly in place in the same street fifty years ago, and a London A-Z for public use mounted on what appears to be a loo chain. The walls are decorated with cartoons relevant to the local area.

Fifteen minutes after walking in, we were still wondering what kind of business this is – then, watching the pre-8am queue, we got it. This is a true community bar, fulfilling almost the same function as a local pub.

The Street queue is not the same queue as in Soho or East London, but this is an astonishingly 'local' queue. The business is a mix of corner shop, café and coffee bar, with the locals

Street life



occasionally offered the odd friendly insult from behind the counter - 'seven quid!' comes the demand for a double espresso, and 'no dogs!' is yelled at one customer who enters with one, even though there are already four dogs nosing around the cafe. This newest customer, a Chinese TV personality known for his style and fashion programmes, looks momentarily baffled, then grins widely and returns the banter in good part.

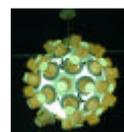
The guy behind it all is Adrian Jones, known for his anarchic sense of humour, his championing of Papua New Guinea coffee, and a creative use of blackboards and A-boards which has often got him into trouble.

At the same time, Street sponsors youth football, supports community projects even to the tune of paying one project's wages when government



An eccentric cafe with a growing reputation

funding was pulled, and one of the charity boxes on the bar reads 'buy a person with dementia a coffee', referring to the same cause.



Adrian Jones and a do-it-yourself lampshade

"One of my staff works there at the dementia centre," explains Adrian. "and when it lost its funding, we helped keep it open. One customer came in here, heard the story, and wrote them a cheque for £3,000... they're doing alright, now."

The overall atmosphere is summed up by the cheerful company statement:

Regular readers know how we love 'twin' businesses – but we have never before come across a combination of coffee shop and barber. But there is now one in Jack Craggs of Nottingham, a possibly-unique enterprise set up this summer by Tom Heafford and his wife.

The name fits in with Tom's belief that the identity of a business has to be carefully chosen.

"There really was a Jack Craggs – he was my wife's grandfather, and his name is more interesting than mine, and it 'sounds right'. It's very important for a name to sound familiar to people... even if they've never heard it before.

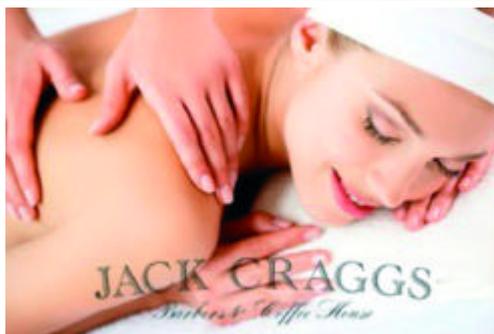
"I'm the coffee man, and my wife's the barber. I had been made redundant, and the idea of our new business was that when most people get their hair cut, their partner goes off elsewhere to grab a coffee. We thought that this was two income streams, which we could put in the same place."

At the same time, they added a third strand - a beauty therapist, offering manicures, pedicures, massages, and the extremely tempting 'age intervention facial'.

As has happened with several coffee-houses recently, practical help came from the Princes Trust.

"They can make all the difference between having an idea and putting it into practice," acknowledges Tom Heafford. "We were given a mentor, who showed us how writing an 8,000-word business plan can turn out to be a really good thing – because when you're busy setting everything up, you can often forget where you said you'd be going!

"Then I did my barista training through Caffe Society, who also supplied the HLF espresso machine."



You don't see many coffee-house signs like this!

'Age-intervention' with the coffee at Jack Craggs

Jack Craggs has a fierce loyalty to its coffee, which is an unusual choice.

"It is imported direct from Peru. It's Pachamama, an organic shade-grown coffee from the Britt brand. My brother-in-law married a Peruvian girl and moved out there, and sent over some ground coffee. We began to get the bean coffee in, and through sampling we discovered that we preferred it to the options we could get here.

"It is more expensive to source it this way, but it's a good coffee, organic and naturally sweet. People have begun to ask what it is, so now we have a large poster describing it."

"Welcome to Street Coffee, where all organic milk and getting your order wrong has been our standard of excellence since 1999".

"The atmosphere works for the people who live here, and all our three sites have the same chaotic lounge feel," observes Adrian. "We're what we call a Loafer café, which is local, organic and animal-friendly!

"Because I'm English, I can do it like a kind of English home. It's not supposed to be an anarchic coffee shop, and still not everyone gets it... I do still get complaints about having Stalin on the wall."

Parts of the décor are quite unique. The hanging light shades are made of takeaway coffee cups.

"We did it to get out of the problem of designers who fit out a shop with forty lights at £16 a bulb - it was costing us £2,000 a year just to change the bulbs! It was a customer who designed the answer.

"We take a big sheet of plastic, stamp out the holes for the cups (which are held in by the rollover lips at the top) and bend it to shape. The ones over the bar, which are square, are made from soup-cup lids. Necessity is the mother of invention - they cost us nothing, and they look damn good!"

One permanent chalkboard in the Bermondsey site marks the company's affinity with Papua New Guinea coffee. By the standards of this business, it seems perfectly logical that Adrian Jones discovered the coffee while bird-watching.

"I've been there twice to meet the growers, and one occasion I was the first white man on the plantation for seven years. I found Papua New Guinea coffee because I love the nature side of the place, and as a keen 'twitcher' I support organic coffee grown under forest cover as it helps the environment, as opposed to sun-grown which destroys the forest.

"We have made it our business to go and meet the farmers - yes, you can be told that what you buy from a wholesaler can be all organic and all Fairtrade... it can also be all bullshit."

A notable feature is the constantly-changing exterior chalkboard signs for which Street has become infamous. A typical morning's A-board may read: 'coffee, tea, filled rolls, nude girls...', and very often refer to the day's news. With the badger-cull imminent, a recent board offered 'badger-friendly milk', and when with a senior official in trouble for what he called Downing Street policemen, another board simply offered an invitation to 'plebs'. We dare not reprint one which said what Jones thought about some coffee snobbery in east London!

"My favourites come from around the time Obama got in," recalls Adrian. "When Bush was president, we had an A-board which said 'all Americans must be accompanied by an adult'.

"When Obama got in, it became 'Americans are now welcome!'"

It can be very tempting to give a coffee shop a famous name, but it is a practice with hazards – we once reported on a bar which had been named *Sergeant Pepper's*, with appropriate décor throughout, and which then received the undivided attention of the Beatles' legal team. We have also reported on a café which is 'themed' around local villains and criminals, including their photographs – that seems an equally dangerous tactic.

In Southsea, Richard and Carole Stafford have created a venue which honours someone fondly remembered in the area - Sellers is named after the actor who was both a Goon and Inspector Clouseau.

"Portsmouth has a number of famous sons," notes Carole. "Charles Dickens would have been 200 this year, a birthday which is being much celebrated here, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was working as a local doctor when he wrote Sherlock Holmes at the other end of the street that our coffee house is on.

"Peter Sellers is far less known as a Pompey boy but was born on the opposite corner to Sellers Coffee House; some interpret our name as a salute to a local lad made good and some don't make any connection and see us as sellers of extraordinary coffee. We sit on the fence and remain silent."

There is no formal contact with the actor or his family.

"Our only contact thus far has been from a number of ardent fans who have visited his birth place and been thrilled to find us opposite. We do display some photographs of Peter and some copy film posters, these are widely available on the internet and, we therefore presume, properly licensed.

"We had a recent visit from a lovely American lady who writes for the Peter Sellers Appreciation Society and I am certain that we will be mentioned in their next magazine which is distributed globally. I note that some of

London - European 'city of coffee'



In a promotion which has been almost entirely missed by the coffee community and media, London has been named European City of Coffee. The award comes from Villeroy & Boch, the ceramic cup makers, who designed cups for four likely contender cities, and then opened the matter up for vote on Twitter. There were 2,800 votes, and the company invited the Euphorium Bakery café of London to host an event to give away a thousand free London cups (pictured) to consumers.



Sellers' doggie lounge

Clouseau and the coastal coffee shop scene

Peter's children are patrons and genuinely wait with interest to see if we receive any correspondence... just in case, I have been dusting off my kneeling mat and trying my best to imitate the look our terrier gives us when we are all trooping out the house and he knows he's to be left alone again!"

Notably, Sellers has been awarded five paws from the Good Dog Guide, and has a dedicated Doggy Corner - is this a good idea, in that it attracts dog owners yet keeps dogs away from those who may not like them? The business also has a policy of wide table spacing, to allow for prams and buggies, instead of cramming in as many seats as possible - it helps that the building used to be a pub (the old-

est in Portsmouth) and so the main room was built to generous proportions.

"We are on the edge of Southsea common and within view of the seafront promenade, and both naturally are used by locals to exercise their four-legged friends. Due to this and because we are dog owners we have a dedicated Canine Corner, which comprises eight covers separated from the remainder of the cafe by a four-foot high wall.

"We provide free dog biscuits and water bowls in this space and it has worked very well for us. It is on occasions full, with the result that dog owners do sit in the main cafe area, and to date this has not proved a problem.

"Our policy of table spacing has helped in this. Because our tables are not crammed together, it is very easy to navigate through whether you are disabled and in a wheelchair, you are a dog walker, or have young children in prams or pushchairs.

"This is another deliberate decision. It has on occasion resulted in us having no tables available, but we try and stay aware of this and will bring additional tables out of our store if needed."

Having ideas like this involves determination to carry them through – as many café owners have found, red tape can often get in the way of a genuine desire to make a coffee house work.

"We quickly tired of the sucking in of breath and tutting, whenever we asked to do something, even the ordinary," remarks Carole. "We realised, and it has become a bit of a mantra, that 'it is easier to seek forgiveness than ask permission!'"

Sellers' coffee is Liscio, from Limini of Yorkshire, who also handled the barista training.

"We undertook a lot of research, their coffee was one of our favourites and is very well received by our customers. They also provided our recipes - we have yet to be asked for a cup of coffee that we have been unable to produce."

Limini told us: "Liscio is a mix of beans from Brazil, Costa Rica and Indonesia. Liscio means 'smooth' in Italian, and the blend is sweet and not too heavy - it's great for people who really do not like any bitterness in their coffee."

We do enjoy seeing interesting items on a menu - and our attention was grabbed recently by two items from the Café Boscanova, in 'bohemian Boscombe', next to Bournemouth; this is the town which actually constructed an artificial reef for surfers.

The two items which drew us were London Fog and Red-Eye. The former is a curious one, which turns out to be Earl Grey tea steeped with milk and a shot of vanilla syrup.

"Our first chef discovered the London Fog," recalls the café's Joe Lovett. "We believe it originates from Seattle and was a kind of 'underground' drink for many years. It's like a less sickly or less synthetic version of a chai latte... and we used to also have a soy version called a Boscombe fog due to the high number of vegans in the area!"

"I have to say, coffee is the true passion, so I would love to one day be brave enough to take fogs and chais off the menu, but they really are part of the cafe now."

So is the Red-Eye - this is a filter coffee topped with a double ristretto, and served black or white.

"The Red-Eye was for customers who seemed to want more of a 'hit'.

A London fog in Boscombe



We serve a lot of brewed coffee which we bulk-brew into airpots, but always single-origin beans, weighed and ground fresh for each pot, and the information about the coffee put up on a board.

"This has been the biggest growth area for us, and this year our brewed coffee is finally selling double the amount of Americano.

"The addition of the ristretto was to give a lot more body for those that preferred it that way as a lot of the single origins can be quite delicate."

The café has also introduced the piccolo.

"I think we put on the piccolo after a

trip to London. I had one there that was so rich and sweet I drank them solidly for about a year until I was introduced to brewing coffee."

As is becoming something of a trend in coffee houses, Boscanova features its own unique decoration - this is a lampshade of golden cutlery.

"It comes from having very little money to set up with, so we made a lot of stuff from things we could get for free!" explains Joe.

"Our sign was made from the scaffold planks we had used to plaster the ceiling from, as was the counter. The light was an old shade we were given that didn't look good... until we added some of my nan's old cutlery!"

United Coffee's monkey business

United Coffee appears to have been quite deliberately teasing the rest of the coffee trade with the launch of its new consumer-sales website, **Make Decent Coffee** – it recruited the TV personality Peter Andre for a launch stunt on the theme of overthrowing instant coffee.

Peter Andre is of course the singer who was thoroughly lampooned by the serious press when he was hired by Costa to launch their flat white in 2010, and then opened up his own New York Coffee Club cafes in East Grinstead and Brighton.

Last month he was hired for an event which involved throwing packs of instant coffee into a skip parked outside the Houses of Parliament. In this, he was joined by costumed 'gorillas', for reasons which remain unclear.

At the event, Peter Andre is supposed to have said: "Decent coffee comes in many forms but instant isn't one of them. There is nothing like the taste of real coffee, yet so many people needlessly settle for instant."

This quite deliberately provocative statement had the expected effect from the makers of instant coffee – except for Nescafe, which suffered a sense of humour failure and said that as Andre was clearly being paid to trash the concept of instant coffee, they wouldn't help his publicity by responding.

Others, however, took the stunt with great good humour and responded in kind. Cafedirect commented: "Peter should try our Macchu Picchu freeze-dried, we reckon he would quickly change his mind."



And Douwe Egberts added: "instant coffee remains the daily coffee of choice for millions of consumers in the UK and many other markets around the world, including Australia" (that was probably a dig at Peter Andre's background in one of the major coffee countries of the world, although the personality is actually London-born). "Instant coffee is chosen for its convenience, ease of preparation and consistent great taste; to dismiss it is to disregard the preferences of everyday consumers."

The Make Decent Coffee sales includes several interesting items distributed by United Coffee - filter brewing items such as the Aeropress, the V60, and the Chemex, and serious espresso equipment such as the extremely eye-catching Victoria Arduino Venus.

The Japanese continue to come up with new café ideas. Following the ones where you can cuddle a pet or be served by a girl in French maid outfit, they now have the first 'co-sleeping specialty cafe', where the customers can pay to go to sleep in the arms of a beautiful girl. The menu features such optional items as 'girl pats customer on the back, three minutes - 1,000 yen' (about £24), and the intriguing 'customer and girl stare at each other, one minute - 1,000 yen'. Recruitment ads say the girls are paid around £30 an hour.



Kaldi

Several months back (it is reported) a barista in Georgia responded to an order by a Korean customer by drawing a racist oriental caricature on the cup – the chain reacted with an extremely swift statement, including the phrase 'this employee is no longer with us'. Astonishingly, it is reported, exactly the same has now happened in Paris.

The Japanese have also opened the first Thunderbirds-themed coffee house. Inside, there are rare items from the show as well as replica Thunderbird vehicles on display, with episodes shown on continuous loop. We have seen the menu – Parker's hot chocolate, Tracy family coffee, and Lady Penelope's Assam tea are all 480 yen, which is about a tenner.

An American website has highlighted what are allegedly two similar and extremely odd cases of racism, one in a branch of Starbucks in the southern state of Georgia, and one in France. It follows the recent news of baristas being told to ask customers for their names, which can be written on cups for identification at the service end of the counter.

The US chain Dunkin' Donuts has tried to register the phrase 'best coffee in America' as a trademark. The US authorities have in the past declined attempts such as 'best beer in America'. Business reporters have recalled that Walmart once tried unsuccessfully to trademark the smiley face logo, that two universities went to court over an attempt to 'own' the colour orange, and that Harley Davidson failed to trademark the sound 'vroom-vroom'.

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