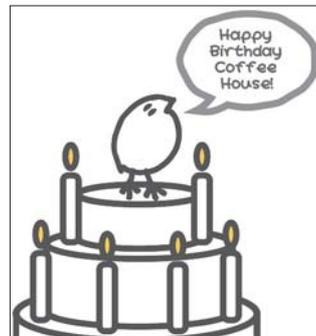


March 2013

Boughton's

COFFEE HOUSE



AND NOW WE ARE TEN...!



Coffee House is very glad – and indeed rather proud – to report that this is our tenth anniversary issue.

To mark ten years of our attempts to provide a meaningful news service to the coffee trade, we have now been able to pass donations from the sale of our book, 'Coffee House Capers', to the two charities involved, Shelter from the Storm, and Health Help International. It would be crass to talk figures, but we can report that each received a four-figure sum, for which credit is due to all those in the trade who supported the project, either by buying the book or advertising. Thank you.

And there are still copies left!

This month also marks the magazine's move from Cornwall to a village in Norfolk... our new address is on page 4



The two charities which benefitted from the sales of Kaldi's book are Shelter from the Storm, founded by Louie Salvoni of Espresso Service and supported by many in the coffee trade, and Health Help International, which pays for healthcare for the destitute sick in India. Louie Salvoni and co-founder Sheila Scott of Shelter from the Storm are shown with Kaldi's book and their cheque.

Jaguar's big entry boost for cafe trade awards

The beverage trade's major awards scheme may see a major increase in entries this year, through an initiative by Jaguar, the importer and distributor of spare parts to the coffee machine trade. Jaguar is likely to subsidise a hundred entries to the Beverage Standards Association's annual accreditation scheme, from beverage operators who might not otherwise have been able to put themselves in for recognition.

The theory of the BSA awards is to give cafes and caterers the chance to display a quality sign or 'mark' which confirms that the venue prepares and serves its drinks in what the trade considers the right manner, and to the proper standards.

There are some individual prizes awarded to some cafes which are reckoned to have served the judges the best drinks in the country, but the overall benefit of the scheme is that the beverage industry can demonstrate in public view an increasing number of venues working to high standards.

As with so many trade contests, the drawback is of numbers – the number of outlets now serving espresso-based coffee might be reckoned to have reached the hundreds of thousands, but entries to national café or barista contests still struggle to reach three figures. It is possible that entry fees may be a reason.

Jaguar may hit three figures by itself this year, confirms managing director James Russell. He has promised that his trade distributor customers, many of whom are espresso engineers serving coffee-houses, can nominate deserving beverage operators for entry, and Jaguar will subsidise those entries.

"We were involved last year as sponsors of the three milk-based drink prizes, and while there were a lot of things about the contest that we liked, the thing that stood out for us was that the numbers were not enough.

"Every entrant we spoke to, without exception, said that the process had been good for them, on two levels – not just in the local press publicity drawing people in, but the process of being monitored and the target of keeping



James Russell and Helen Taylor of Jaguar

standards up in a day-to-day business.

"But it really stood out that this has to be on a bigger scale, because the more winners, the more credibility... if a consumer sees one sticker on a window, they may forget it, but when they see it again and again, they realise it must mean something.

"The overall idea of something that the public can see relating to drink standards is a good one for the trade in general."

The British operation of the Byron Bay Cookies business has said that it expects no disruption to its business with the coffee-house trade, despite worrying press reports from its native Australia.

The company has reportedly been threatened by a winding-up order from the Australian tax office; press reports there have said that the manufacturing side of the business is in the hands of receivers.

The head of the UK operation, Mark Perrin, has confirmed to us that: "the UK operation is a separate business – our cookies are still baked in Lancashire, the twenty jobs we created in a high-unemployment area are safe, and we will continue to supply through Beyond the Bean."

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Hollywood star George Clooney is no longer the international face of Nespresso; the brand has decided on a change after six years.

Arguing that it is 'scientifically proven' that the sound level in coffee shops increases creativity (and it must have worked for JK Rowling writing the Harry Potter books) the Coffitivity.com website will now play the sounds of a typical working coffee shop, as an aid to help home and lone workers to concentrate. (We find it a little too intense).

Taylor's of Harrogate and the Rooster brewery of Yorkshire have combined to create a new coffee porter called Londinium. It features Taylor's After Dark coffee. A chocolate and coffee beer was presented at the Yaxley Winter Beer Festival in Suffolk. It was created by the Evolution brewery of King's Lynn, and the festival organiser said it was a 'Marmite' beer - drinkers either loved it or hated it.

Another plan to create a coffee shop from a disused toilet block has cropped up - this is in Lancashire, and comes from a user of the Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre who realised that the block, which once included a refreshment centre, had been 'left to rot'. The new idea is to form a café and art gallery.

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of coffee houses catering for cyclists - but a professional cyclist had a bike worth £7,000 stolen after leaving it, unlocked, outside a coffee-house in Lancaster. It is one of only eight in the world and was needed for an interna-

tional race in Taiwan. Luckily, police recovered it with four days to spare.

The proposed Costa branch in Burnham, Slough, which was the subject of three petitions and several letters of protest, opened at the beginning of March. The planning row had gone on since October. Costa has also now opened in Southwold, the east Anglian town which has been the subject of fierce planning disputes over the chain's arrival. The chain handed out vouchers for free drinks, and the chamber of commerce urged consumers to keep supporting independent businesses.

Another crowd-funding project in support of a coffee house is intended to provide a new home for the Divine coffee house in Nottingham, where the proprietor, Ashe Wright, is reported to have received three months' notice to quit from a property developer. An appeal for £7,500 has been put out on the indiegogo.com site, with various rewards for donations of amounts from £10 to £500. However, the owner says that most people who have pledged donations have not asked for anything in return.

The Ludlow Food Centre, which we featured last month and which features a working roastery roaster visible to its coffee shop customers, has been voted UK Farm Retailer Of the Year.

Cafeology has won the coffee and tea contract from the YHA to supply all the hostels throughout England and Wales.



We confess to having been entranced by the press announcement heading which told us: 'afternoon tea comes to Oswaldtwistle!'. It turns out to be a £100,000 investment at Oswaldtwistle Mills, in which the Terrace Tea Room will open on 27th March and be run by the Massarella catering group. The 'Ossy Mills' is connected to the invention of the spinning jenny, used to be a massive cotton industry site, and is now a destination shopping site which draws a million people a year. But look at the signage - have you ever seen peppermint tea promoted so boldly?

Cafe seat fees go up by 600%

There have been protests in south Devon over a local authority which wants to raise its fees for outdoor furniture by 600 per cent. A collection of business owners in Torbay have complained about 'a tax on café culture', and one café owner, whose licence will rise from £560 to £4,000, has protested that the charge is in direct contradiction to the council's stated aim to encourage café culture to make the area more attractive to tourists. He wrote to the council: "If you could guarantee us glorious sunshine every day then we would be happy to pay for our table licence per table as proposed, but as our outside seats remain mostly empty for over half of the year, this proposal is clearly unworkable. Our only option will be to go back to closing for half of the year and only open if the sun shines - people will lose their jobs." Another caterer has pointed out that his licence will rise from £755 to £5,500, after the area experienced the wettest summer for a hundred years. The solicitors acting for the licensees has reported that the council has conceded the rate is potentially higher than even that in Westminster - but they said the outlook over the Torquay harbour is probably better.

The My Coffee Stop business on the platform of Enfield Chase station is known for being active in its business community, and is currently leading a campaign of 'shock cash mobs'.

A cash mob, as we have reported before, is when one business becomes the subject of a short and sharp support campaign by shoppers.

"In shock cash mobs, the shop keeper doesn't know they are going to be mobbed, and the shoppers don't know where they are going until the last minute," the coffee house's Karen Mercer told us. "We aim to get around ten people in the mob and each person pledges to spend a tenner in the chosen shop. It's very exciting and the craze is spreading across the UK - the 'shock' mob was started by me in Enfield, and they have now been organised in Cambridge, Holmfirth, Bude and the Isle of Wight."

"The ones that I have arranged so far have put around £1,500 directly into the tills of local and independent retailers, as well as boosting their profile by being in the local and national papers, on radio and also mentioned and shown on TV.

"It's a very exciting and innovative campaign and I would love for other independent coffee shop owners to get involved and arrange them in their own areas."

More holy orders for the coffee trade

The concept of coffee houses inside churches has cropped up on both sides of the Atlantic this month. In Pontarddulais, Swansea, the Elim Community Church has submitted plans to use part of its church as a coffee shop.

From America, we're told that a trend to put coffee shops and similar gathering areas in church lobbies started ten years ago, but has recently 'exploded'. An architect in Tulsa, Oklahoma, has now said that 'every church we talk to wants a coffee shop'. "They're trying to become more of a destination, throughout the week," he said. "People are coming from the community into the church, through the coffee shop."

This architect says he has created church coffee shops that are almost identical to Starbucks. A church furniture consultant in Virginia has said he has experienced the same phenomenon.

In Gorgie-Dalry parish church, Edinburgh, ministers have shown plans in which they hope to transform their secondary building into a inclusive coffee-house.

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Hotel coffee - trade still staggered!

It is accepted within the beverage trade that coffee served in the majority of hotels can be pretty awful – so it may have been predictable when Douwe Egberts announced last month the 'staggering' finding that over eighty per cent of hotel guests would be unhappy with a hotel where they had received unacceptable coffee at breakfast.

According to a 'recent survey', Douwe found that freshly-brewed coffee at breakfast came second only to the standard of their room in influencing guests' lasting impression of a hotel.

Poor coffee alone would deter one-third of respondents from returning to a hotel, and 22 per cent of respondents said that the coffee on their most recent hotel visit was either 'below average' or 'very poor'.



Paul Freeman

Challenged by this magazine as to whether this was anything new, marketing director Paul Freeman cheerfully argued that he is making an important point.

"When you put it into context, with customers in the UK being more informed than ever about coffee, then it really is staggering that so many feel let down by the people at the forefront of the hospitality industry. That this continues into 2013 is remarkable – it has still not been addressed.

In particular, noted Paul Freeman, the phenomenon of stewed coffee still remains a feature of too many hotel breakfast rooms.

"Advance bulk-brewing is still the case. Our first-hand experience is that caterers guess at whether to brew five litres or ten litres, as a result of which it's still being kept too long... so why do it at all?

"The surprising thing is that the problem still exists, and consumers are still being let down. Our message to hoteliers is that a consistent quality of coffee is not one of life's impossibilities!"

Workshop, the business which opened its highly-rated London shops under the original name of St Ali, has launched an online service for consumers. Operations director Tim Williams said: "we can now share our level of quality with coffee fans outside London."

A fascinating new angle on barista championships has taken place in Australia - the Da Vinci Chain Barista contest was open to entrants from the big-name coffee chains, the ones who never enter open contests in the UK. An entrant from Muffin Break won.

A great deal of press publicity was given to the number of applicants for jobs at a Costa branch in Nottingham, but that has been topped in Hemel Hempstead, where Francis Canale announced three jobs for the opening of Roastino... and received 2,423 online replies.

About Coffee of Colne, run by Colin and Sue Unwin, has been given a £3,000 council grant to improve their Victorian building.



There had to be a comment on the horsemeat scandal, and sure enough, it turned up in the chill cabinet of Street Coffee of London!

One of the most derided methods of coffee service is the 'pour-and-serve', because it is so associated with stale coffee left sitting on a hotplate. However, Marco Beverage Systems, the specialist in bulk brewers and mobile 'urns', has come up with a counter-top machine which could change that entire image.

Marco's top man, Drewry Pearson has long argued that with simple care, within the abilities of unskilled staff, the pour-and-serve can produce the best coffee in the world. Great coffees can go through it, it is simple to operate and maintain, and cheaper than other equipment. (It is not surprising that so many coffee bars keep one for emergency back-up.)

"I actually believe in the high quality pour-and-serve brewer that sits on the bar in a pub," Drewry Pearson has told *Coffee House*. "It can provide me with a real filter coffee rather than the under-extracted sour and weak Americanos which are often posed as an alternative to the real thing. For a filter coffee drinker, there are infinitely more satisfactory experiences than an Americano!"

The machine has a new 'flash' boiler to give improved water flow and temperature stability, and an improved spray pattern intended to produce a more satisfactory

Marco's hi-tech answer to the jug and hotplate



extraction from the coffee.

"In some ways the Bru might just be seen as 'another' pour-and-serve brewer – in fact, it's a very substantial step up, resulting from what we have learned from our research into coffee brewing,"

says Drewry Pearson. "Our team has produced an aesthetically pleasing brewer which meets SCAE Gold Cup brew standards.

"With the cost restrictions that exist in this sector, innovation is difficult to achieve. Yet we have achieved something unique in the flask model, an innovative patent-pending brewing system. This consistently delivers water at an optimum temperature while not adding to the cost.

"This is a design that forms the platform for what we intend to become a wider range of pour-and-serve brewers."

Many cafe owners have complained about larger operators who blatantly give away free hot drinks right outside independent coffee houses – now one café owner has resigned as president of her local chamber of commerce in protest at the practice.

Gilly Chu, owner of Gilly's in Nailsea, quit to draw attention to a Waitrose promotion which she said had halved her morning coffee trade. She said that the supermarket had persisted with the practice despite the local council asking for it to stop – in response, she said, her local council had been 'shallow and pathetic'.

By coincidence, the chief executive of another chamber of commerce is giving up coffee-house work, blaming the arrival of chains. Rob Perks, chief executive of the Wessex association of chambers of commerce, has applied to turn the Dutch Cottage tea room in Chippenham into a children's nursery.

He told his local paper: "Chains see this as a big town, but it can't support them. But there is a big need for nurseries."

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DRWakefield

The RSPB, the bird charity, is about to launch a promotion in support of its own shade-grown and bird-friendly Nicaraguan coffee. As yet, we know very little about the coffee itself, except that it will be launched on an ecological and environmental theme, and that the RSPB has 'searched the cloud-coated forests for the most bird-friendly beans it could find'. The product is expected to appear in the UK in June.

Peros has taken on sole foodservice distribution of two items from the Jimmy's Iced Coffee range. The product is the only chilled ready-to-drink coffee item made with British milk. The products feature a six-month shelf-life and are suitable for ambient storage and distribution - they are chilled only at the point of sale.

There have been more cases of planned mobile phone thefts from coffee shops. In Sutton and Cheam, a man approached customers at tables and spread theatre leaflets out in front of them as if offering tickets - when they declined, he simply picked up the leaflets and their phones at the same time.

A second attempt is being made to turn empty premises on Ecclesall Road, Sheffield, into a licensed coffee shop. Permission was refused last year because of the expected noise. Now, Sash Ventures of Birmingham has applied to open Couch, 'a takeaway coffee shop offering coffees from around the world'.

Costa is again the star of the Whitbread empire, with sales up by 22.4 per cent to £962 million for the 50 weeks to February.

Costa expects to open in West Bridgford, Nottingham, where there will be eight jobs - the same situation as in Mapperley, where 1,700 people applied and in Long Eaton, where 800 applied. In West Bridgford, a campaign group for independent traders made the derogatory comment that a Costa was not required, because: 'we have a Caffe Nero for people who want that kind of shop'. In Melksham, there have been objections to a proposed Costa opening to be run by a franchisee who has recently survived similar protests in Bristol.

The latest coffee house to be opened as a specifically pet-friendly venue is a pop-up business in Mumbai, India - it is the Mutt Hutt, which is intended to be 'a fun and safe place for pet owners to hang out with their dogs'. The owners say that in other countries, they have seen the idea of venues which are open to pets on some days of the week only, but intend this one to be a full-time animal-friendly business. While the owners go through the right permissions process, overcoming local rules disallowing cooking for humans and dogs in the same place, they are running pop-up dog cafes to get consumers used to the idea.

A fascinating project has come from the Chocolate Box café in Wellington, which has been renamed the Hard Times, to 'reflect life in 21st century Britain'. Everything on the menu has been reduced to 99p, and the owner has said that as she makes all the baked goods herself, she knows the exact cost of everything, and realised that she could still make a profit on low prices. The move was so popular that she doubled the previous month's takings in a week.

The American authorities have imposed penalties of more than \$100,000 on certain Hawaiian coffee farmers, in back wages and penalties for violations of minimum wage, overtime and child labour regulations.

A bizarre case is reported from Wiltshire, where a coffee sign found in breach of planning laws has cost a pub owner a £765 penalty. The offence was of a small illuminated coffee sign erected outside a listed building in 2011 - a planning officer advised the publican that the sign could remain if it was not illuminated, so he removed the bulb. Over a year later, he was issued with a summons, and removed the entire sign, but the council refused to retract the prosecution. He was fined £250 plus a £15 court charge and the council was awarded £500 costs.

Rather unusually, councillors have approved a proposal to turn a 15th century listed property in Lavenham, Suffolk, into a licensed coffee house. The proposer told the council the business would offer 'something different' to the current village tea rooms and pubs and contribute to the local economy by using locally-sourced products, and would provide four new jobs. Unusually, councillors seemed unanimous in approval.

Picnic Cornwall, a new company, will launch its coffee shop and deli in Falmouth at the end of March.

There is apparently argument in the Philippines over the 'masterplan' for the country's coffee industry - a local government official has said that the department of agriculture's programme, backed by farmers' groups and industry stakeholders, 'turns over the preparation of the industry road map to Nestle'.

Beans Coffee Stop has taken on new premises in Stamford high street, moving after seven years in a nearby lane. The owners, Phil and Karen Gilbert, have said that they look forward to being in a position to compete head-to-head with bigger coffee houses. Their shop in Oakham remains shut following a fire last year, but may re-open in summer.

We have always said that baristas come to the job from all kinds of previous life - the New Zealand press has discovered one operating a street cart who arrived from the police's diplomatic protection squad, and is still a qualified firearms trainer. His new job is, he says, less exciting, but certainly less dangerous.

Pawnbrokers growing faster even than coffee houses

Rather surprisingly, coffee shops have not appeared as either star performers or major villains in two pieces of research on the state of the national high street - it has become familiar for the sector to be held up as a major cause of the ruin of the traditional shopping area.

The work, from PWC and the Local Data Company, shows that multiple retailers closed an average of twenty stores a day last year. In what might be considered an interesting comment on the national's financial health, the businesses which increased in numbers were cheque cashers, payday loans, 'pound shops', betting shops and pawnbrokers.

Multiple coffee shops did record an increase, but were placed only halfway through the top ten of biggest-opening sectors.

What has surprised analysts is that in 2012, independent businesses recorded more closures than openings, the first time this has happened for some years. And yet, independents

continue to open far more stores than multiples - independents now account for 69 per cent of all retail and leisure units.

"The big question is whether this latest negative turn for the worse is the start of a downward spiral or merely a blip?" said Matthew Hopkinson, director at the Local Data Company. "The figures suggest the former, as town centres compete as just one of many destination choices for the consumer - recent declining footfall figures in town centres reflect these changes."

The deputy chief executive of the British Independent Retailers Association called the new reports 'a storm warning' for the high street.

The Bean Machine has broken an unusual world speed record, becoming the fastest vehicle to run on caffeine - it reached 65mph. The car is a 1989 Ford pick-up which runs on pellets produced from the chaff produced in coffee roasting. They are heated in a charcoal fire, where they break down into carbon monoxide and hydrogen, which is filtered before the hydrogen is combusted to drive the engine.



Coffee bars - a young person's job?

The American employment media have been getting very agitated over the question of 'ageism' in the coffee bar trade, following the claim by a Baltimore woman that Starbucks fired her because of her age.

The woman, aged 65, was an experienced coffee-stand worker when she got a job with Starbucks six years ago, it has been claimed - but later she was fired and replaced by two workers in their 20s. Starbucks told the American press that it has a zero-tolerance policy for any kind of workplace discrimination, following which it was reported that in 2007, a 53-year-old woman barista sued the chain for exactly that reason, claiming that the manager to whom she applied employed nobody over 30.

The American employment media have noted an interesting philosophical point - Starbucks, which has 150,000 employees, and takes on an average of 140 new staff in the U.S. and Canada every single day, has been applauded as the major 'lifeline' for youngsters looking for a start in the job market. How, ask the commentators, can this be reconciled with the rights of older workers?

Coffee Planet, a vending company which has built a big business in the Middle East, is reported to have plans to bring the concept to the UK, which would effectively pitch it against Costa's Express business. In advance of a speech to be given at the Retail Bulletin International Expansion Summit on March 26th, founder Mike Scully has said that his business was inspired by Coffee Nation, which later turned into Costa Express. In the East, he has now opened in office locations, retail stores such as IKEA, and universities. He has said that the major difference between Planet and similar units in the UK is that his machines accept cash payments, whereas the usual practice here is for the consumer to take coffee from the machine and pay at a counter.



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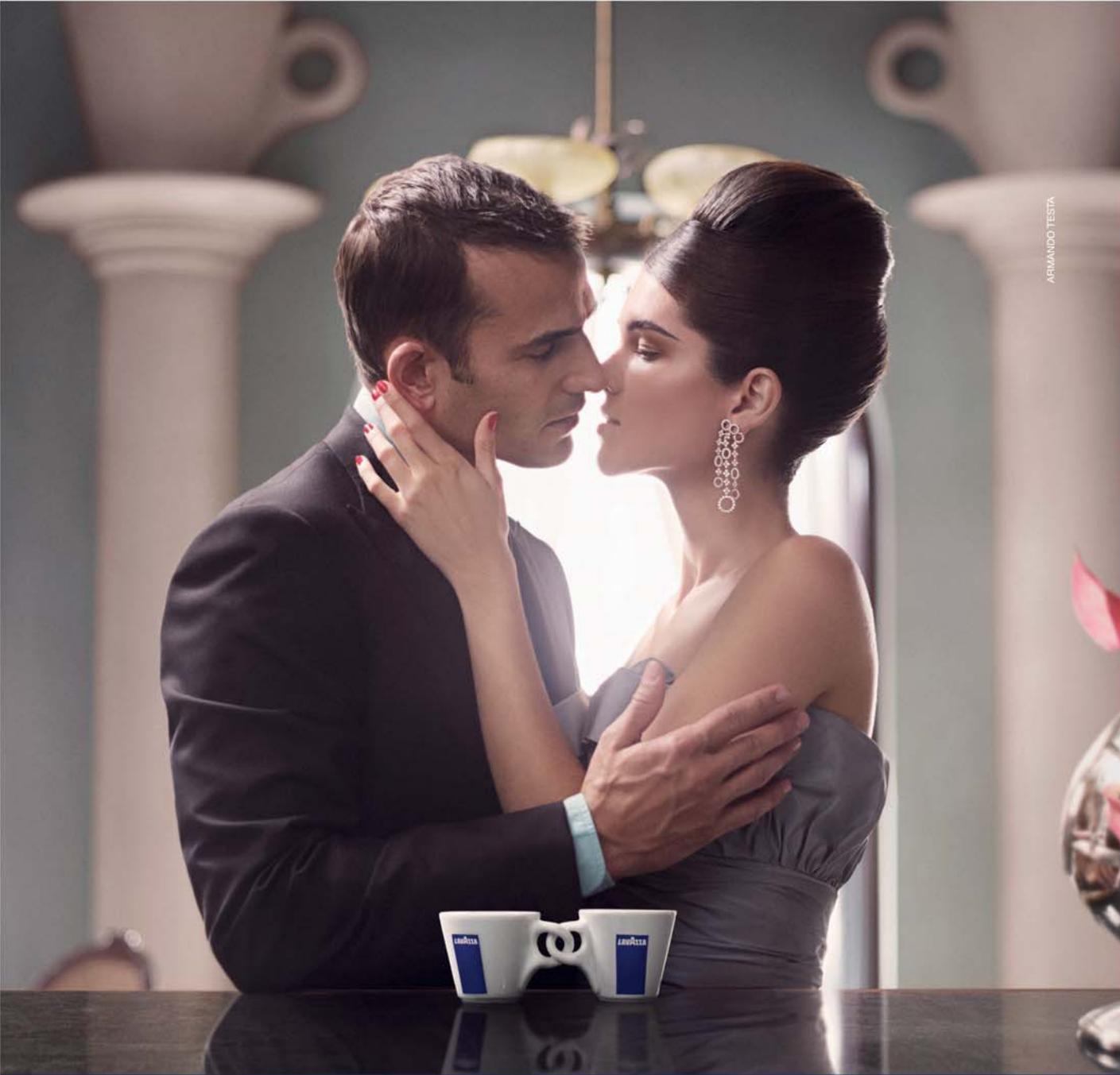
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Branding in tea has long been a subject of argument. The standard line from the giant everyday brands, that 'consumers want the same tea that they get at home', has long been widely derided by the artisan end of the market, who argue that the consumer wants something new and different.

However, the situation at that end of the market has now become rather more confused by a quite astonishing proliferation of new brands – the past two years has seen a procession of new and cool labels, invariably described as 'quirky' brands, popping up from the most unlikely sources... in more than one case, university graduates forming their first businesses.

Many of these 'boutique' brands claim to have been inspired by a dissatisfaction with the standard of tea currently available, and intentionally or otherwise, some of them do give the impression that they are sourcing by personally trekking in sandals across the Himalayas, and heroically blending the results themselves, slaving away in a garret at all hours of the night.

And yet, their teas cannot possibly be so different. There just aren't that many tea blenders around, and it defies belief to think that all these new brands are doing their own work – there must be a suspicion that they are simply buying off-the-shelf from wholesalers.

Is there really a problem?

"I know that many fly-by-night tea operations are being supplied off the shelf – exasperating is too mild a

word... it's infuriating!" says Marco Olmi at Drury Tea and Coffee. "They pop up, tell us everything we should know about tea, make it funky with gimmicky packaging... and it's all the same tea! It's all off the shelf!"

Drury did, for many years, have an interest in a tea-blending operation, which still shares its premises.

"We still spend a lot of time blending teas, because we enjoy it," remarks Olmi. "We could buy three or four Moroccan Mints off the shelves, but we prefer working on it ourselves. We can put an individual stamp on it, and can distinguish 'our' tea.

"There's a few of us genuine tea blenders still left in the UK, but the boutique brands are certainly not doing it! What they specify, and I've heard them say this, is: 'I want a tea like so-and-so's tea'.

"Then, for them, it's all about the branding – and they have the nerve to say they're shocked at the state of tea? Nonsense!"

So who can we believe? Who is actually putting in creative work on tea?

It might be argued that Teapigs, the irreverent brand which pioneered the pyramid tea-bag, started the whole small-brand phenomenon off.

"Yes, we expected to see followers... but we're surprised at quite how many!", founder Nick Kilby told us. "It does reassure us that everyone seems to be repeating the mantra that we've been preaching for seven years, that it's time to upgrade to the better quality of whole leaf tea.



Erica Moore - in the background, she is seen tea-picking in China

Cool tea brands – who's doing the all the work?

"When Louise and I started Teapigs, we did set out with an ambitious objective of raising quality standards and shaking up the sleepy old tea category. It took time, but we're pretty pleased with our progress.

"Louise and I had over 30 years' experience in tea before we started this and Louise is a fully trained tea-taster of many years' standing. She personally selects, tastes and approves every tea that is packed under our name. Yes, it is possible to go to one of the few suppliers of whole-leaf tea and buy what is given to you at a price that fits your business plan... but that doesn't necessarily mean quality, or a tea the consumer wants."

Cool branding alone is not enough for a cafe owner to make a buying decision, he says.

"A brand with consumer appeal will certainly give the coffee bar an identity, but the decision should primarily be based on quality."

How then does the coffee-house operator go about making a choice? Suppliers all go on about the need for staff to taste and try and compare... but tea companies taste like professional tasters, and cafe owners and staff do not. This is just one of the gulfs which exist between the big tea companies and the average coffee house.

"The best way to compare teas is to make the teas yourself in the way you always would... the slurp-and-spit tradition is fine for qualified tasters but not right for the novice. You're more likely to end up with a stained shirt than a developed tea palate.

"And certainly not taste them under pressure from any salespeople. Try out with some regular customers and get their feedback, or invite friends."

(Although known for its independent nature, Teapigs has, of course, a big brand background – it was financed by a giant foreign group which also owns one of the major tea brands. "We have run the business totally autonomously,

without any help or support," remarks Nick Kilby, adding in typical Teapigs style: "If we'd had 'support', we'd have failed!")

Other smaller and artisan brands are vocal in support.

"This is a great question to raise!" says Erica Moore, of Eteaket in Edinburgh, who has her own tea-room, but also a wholesale tea business to other caterers. In 2005, Eteaket did start with the conventional aim of changing the tea industry – 'tea was due a makeover', they said, and British tea 'was a prisoner in its own tea bag'.

“ There are two great questions to ask of a potential tea supplier... who blends it for you, and who packs it for you? ”

To change it, the partners travelled and did their own research – but not all do.

"The tea industry is an appealing prospect to graduates or anyone entrepreneurial," says Erica. "They see the success of other brands and want to replicate this. The apparent low barrier to entry, especially if done solely online, can also be an attractive factor.

"However, I do believe that to become a long-term success, it's imperative that tea is sourced as directly as possible.

"We have travelled to China, India, Japan and Sri Lanka to find and meet our suppliers, and to see and learn about the tea process first-hand. We have been privileged enough to have met some of the best Tea Masters and

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Happy 10th Anniversary to Boughton's Coffee House (you're so old)

teachers in the world. This gives our brand the validity and authenticity that resonates with consumers – 'cool' branding can only take you so far, and ultimately a lack of legitimacy in the product will become apparent.

"In addition, our experience in running our own city centre tea room means we are uniquely placed to give practical advice that matters to our wholesale customers – there are very few independent tea suppliers that are in this position."

Of course, not all teas are blends – the top ones are good single-origins, and here, the question is of whether a brand actually has any relationship with the farmer, or is simply buying from a wholesaler and slapping a 'quirky' label on.

Kristiane Blomqvist is the founder of Emeyu Teas, which are sold in the UK through Mozzo (a coffee supplier in its own right) and she was first introduced to green teas in China and Japan. Experiencing a tea ceremony high in the mountains on Hokkaido Island is one of the most vivid memories of her childhood, she recalls.

“ A 'cool' branding can only take you so far, and ultimately a lack of legitimacy in the product will become apparent.

- Erica Moore, Eteaket

”

Her travels have brought some extremely unusual tea, including rare oolong teas from an award-winning family farm in Taiwan. The farmer here is a fourth-generation producer, who has himself been farming for 45 years and has a vast reputation in Taiwan. For forty years they were personal tea suppliers to the head of state.

The Taiwanese oolongs have tasting notes such as 'silky almond-coloured infusion and a seductive aroma of orchid...fresh and fragrant with overtones of lily'. There are apparently celebrity fans of the tea, which can be found in Park Lane hotels, but it is the personal link with the grower, says the brand, that distinguishes a meaningful small tea brand, and provides stories which can be used in promoting the tea.

So how does a café owner decide between a 'cool' brand and one that knows what it's talking about? An enjoyably pugnacious argument, and some suggestions, come from the chairman of one of what appears to be one of the most traditional brands in image, but which has more behind it than meets the eye – this is Newby, and its chairman Nirmal Sethia.

"The twentieth century saw the decline and destruction of tea culture," says Mr Sethia challengingly.

"Because it is a \$125 billion industry, not enough people realise that tea is like a human being – a multi-segment thing that is judged by character. Too many people are interested in it only in the concept of marketing it... it is too easy and tempting to go for the cheapest tea and try to make a quick buck out of it."

This has some curious product results, he observes: "some suppliers are putting bergamot into anything and calling it an Earl Grey!"

How, then, does the chairman of a noted tea brand suggest that cafe owners judge what they are offered?

"Tea is like diamonds – the best jeweller in the world will not tell the difference between two diamonds without putting them next to each other, so put the teas together, and brew them with the same water."

And there is a very good question to ask a potential tea supplier, says Newby. It is one that no other tea brand has remarked upon.

"The question is – where is your packaging line, and do you own it?"

There is a reason for this strange question, says Mr. Sethia.

"A good tea has a good shelf life. If a tea is badly packed, its life will be compromised. Too many tea companies are going through a packing factory that is doing forty or fifty tea brands... and doesn't stop between them."

"This is like going into a public bath which has never been cleaned!"

One unfortunate result of this, says Newby, is 'black fungus'. Due to the residual moisture in the processed dry leaf, fungi can develop over time if a tea is not carefully packed, stored or preserved.

Newby suggests that this problem is more prevalent than the tea industry would like to admit, which is why the brand is so keen on its unique 'preservation facility' in India – this is a built-to-order facility which has continuous humidity control, air-purification systems and what is said to be 'the most hygienic environment possible to prevent cross contamination'.

And so, for the cafe owner, there are now two great questions to ask of a potential tea supplier – not just 'who blends it', but 'who packs it for you?'

Those two will sort out the men from the boys!



Emeyu - tea with a story, and a link to the grower

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Wholesalers to the coffee-house trade are often in an uncomfortable position – they come under no end of attack for anything less than wonderful service, and are assumed to be ‘middlemen’, simply taking a slice of the action from every product that moves through the trade. But on the other hand, they are the first people to be called when a café owner has a problem... and are expected to solve it, whether that problem is directly related to them or not.

Jonathan Money at Cream Supplies brings a highly-individual approach to wholesaling. He is one of the most comprehensive sources of flavoured syrups, with maybe seven different brands in stock at any time, and at the same time, he has a vast interest in the unusual – he championed the Red Espresso rooibos product, supplies molecular gastronomy products, is a source of technical and geeky barista equipment such as PH meters and total-dissolved-solids meters, and also has a surprisingly comprehensive stock of books on coffee (including, to our great surprise, the one by this magazine!)

What really is the role of the ‘non-manufacturer supplier’, such as Jon Money? To what degree is he ‘responsive’, being a convenient warehouse facility that café owners expect to be able to call upon at a moment’s notice, and to what degree do both manufacturers and café owners expect him to do all the work of bringing a product to the trade?

No wholesaler can be expected to

Pushing from the middle

Wholesalers to the cafe trade get it in the neck from every direction – cafe owners are demanding from one side, manufacturers demanding from another. Is supplying the coffee-house trade a creative role?

lay aside the rest of his life to concentrate on just one product, much as the maker might want him to. On the other hand, an independent wholesaler such as Jon has remarkable freedom of movement to pick up a product he believes in, which can be a big help for both sides of the trade... because the man in the middle may well be the first to recognise a product which is going to be of genuine use to the café operator, and be the one to introduce it to them.

"A lot of new products die because the manufacturer doesn't understand the distribution situation," observes Jonathan. "I have said this to a lot of them. A big disease of British industry is not actually knowing who the customer is!"

That is a very curious statement - manufacturers don't know what to do with their own products?

It is partly down to misunderstanding of the market and partly down to the attitude of the generic salesman, explains Jon.

"Something manufacturers often do not understand is that their own salesmen have to know and understand their product and believe in it. As it is, many of the sales people we're dealing with seem trained to lie... often, it's only when you get to the top man that you get the real information.

"You have to have a little sympathy. We're humans, not product-dispensing robots, and when you get past the bull***t, manufacturers are probably having the same human problems as the rest of us.

"But I do hate their salespeople lying to me, and I've dropped several suppliers over this. It would be far easier for them to tell the truth and discuss things with us.

"As an example, you will see manufacturers 'launching' products at trade shows, and it's not a launch at all – it's a test!"

Why is that so bad? It's wrong on two counts, says Jon Money – to pretend a product is being 'launched' when it is not is an untruth, and second, it is strategically wrong.

"We say, don't test a new idea on the consumer, test it on your network – which is us.

"But too many manufacturers' salesmen only see us as another customer who they have to impress... so they come in to us and say 'we have a great product', and five times out of ten we answer that we're not interested. You should see the look of disbelief on their faces!

"They're 'selling', not 'understanding'. They don't realise what a massive commitment it is for a wholesaler to take on they new product. They should have been in six months earlier saying 'we've got a great product idea...', and then perhaps we could have worked on it together and made it work."

Does such co-operation ever actually happen?

"Oh yes, intelligent suppliers working beside wholesalers is the key.

"I spend a lot of time on this because I think that in the end, it's very important to present a product idea properly



to the independent operators so that they find it useful and use it."

Isn't that the maker's job?

"The manufacturer does the job of making the product and getting it in the box. The manufacturer cannot be expected to react quickly to changes in demand from the marketplace because manufacturing doesn't work like that – they work long-term.

"The distribution network has to absorb the shock for the manufacturer. We should be in a position to gather information and predict what is going to be in demand.

"We're at the coalface, and manufacturers are not. What they need is an intelligence network, and that's what we are. We are constantly feeding market data to manufacturers.

"We can analyse what's happening, make decisions, and tell a supplier: 'there'll be a demand on this, it's going on the food TV show on Saturday!' And they generally respond."

“ A big disease of British industry is not actually knowing who the customer is! ”

Are all manufacturers responsive to ideas coming up from the distribution route?

"I do think manufacturers absorb what we say, even if not immediately. They seem to consider: 'is this just a crazy idea from Jon, or is it something we're also hearing from elsewhere... do we need to do something?'

"Motta, who make stainless steel barista equipment, are very good at this. They are probably very busy buying steel on the international market, but when we feed them British market intelligence, they listen.

"Beyond the Bean are also extremely good at this – they really have the pulse of the market, which makes it much easier to sell their stuff!

"A successful manufacturer who will take responsibility for marketing and

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market knowledge, can expect the wholesaler to have their product in stock, ready to springboard off their joint activity.

"It is the co-ordination which makes a product become a success... but loads of products get launched without it, and nothing may happen to them."

An active wholesaler can often be the driving force in bringing new ideas to market. Cream Supplies was very early in distributing such items as the Aeropress, the Mypressi Twist (a hand-operated espresso brewer which works by a small gas canister), a unique Mexican hot chocolate, and quite recently, milk steaming jugs with built-in temperature gauges.

The newest arrival is of stainless steel Turkish coffee pots – these were traditionally made from copper or brass, but the modern market looks for more durable dishwasher-proof materials, not historically a requirement!

All this is not an accident – Jon Money does not just stumble across these things, but has an active view towards product research.

"This is constant. We are always gathering intelligence, always chasing down references in conversations, online forums, blogs... if you are prepared to chase these things down, you really can find new stuff, and that's my job."

It is always said that a salesman must know their product. To what degree has Jon Money tried and tasted everything he stocks? Has he experienced a latte made with every one of all their various vanilla options, or gingerbread options?

"Some products are not suitable for vegans, so I can't try them all myself... this is a big dilemma. However, we are very active in product demonstrations and generally, all our staff will try a product. And generally, if the staff give it the thumbs-up, we will stock it."

"I have made a mistake in this – there was a smoothie product I thought would work, and I should have listened to the staff. It didn't!"

"But in the case of Kokoa Collection hot chocolate, we have all made the drinks. In the case of some new bubble teas, which we have from two suppliers, everybody has tried them."

How about the flavoured syrup sector? Is it really as active as we are told it is? It is, says Jon Money, but here comes a surprise: for all he is a great fan of the coffee trade, most of his business turns out to be direct to consumers.

"Seventy per cent of our syrup sales are direct to consumers, because eighty per cent of our customers are consumers!"

"Consumers, you find, want quality, whereas many cafes want the cheap

stuff. This is another thing that manufacturers need to understand, and which a wholesaler already does – while you need good equipment to turn out a good coffee, ninety per cent of cafes are very hard-up.

"We also now sell vast amounts of syrups to bars - it was the Monin product which opened up that sector for us. I do like the new Monte Bello syrups and liqueur syrups, which are very imaginative, and they looked at the Fairtrade element as well - I wish more manufacturers would look outside the box a bit more."

That fits a personal interest - Jon Money is an enthusiastic experimenter, and it was he who set up a molecular gastronomy display at Caffe Culture a few years back. This is the theory used by the likes of Heston Blumenthal, who break items down into their constituent parts and effectively rebuild them... it was a rare opportunity for cafe owners to see 'spherification' and other imaginative techniques in action.

"Am I an experimenter? Totally! That's why I do this - I've been driven to this industry by an interest in healthy food and drink that tastes good."

Even if a supplier is imaginative, how conservative is the coffee house trade compared to, say, the cocktail bar trade? Many suppliers say that coffee house owners are extremely cautious... others say that café owners just don't have the funds to gamble on something new.

"Cocktail bars are very much the same as coffee bars, in that you see the same market set-up, with the independents and the corporates.

"Many new cocktail bars are 'just' bars – they all go with major brands for a reliable return, and because they're so conservative, they all look like other bars.

"You find more innovation and risk-taking in independent coffee shops because the set-up costs are lower, and because coffee bar owners know they aren't going to get anywhere by looking like Costa.

"I do think many coffee shops need to learn the lessons of the chains... but then, don't do what the chains do! Take risks with your new drinks and your new foods, and most of all link with your community, and have roots in your community.

"There are big companies who say they have roots in the community, but that's all fake – fight it.

"Really involve yourself in the community, display exhibitions by local artists, have local groups meet in your coffee-house... as much as you think of your own coffee-shop, think of the local community.

"You must put down real roots in a community... if you don't, you deserve to fail."

The 'buying motivators' of coffee-house owners

The subject of suppliers to the coffee-house trade has been widely discussed by our readers this month, not least because one notable tea-room owner had some strong words about them in our last issue. Among the comments we received as a result were 'suppliers really need a rocket up the...!', and 'why do suppliers expect us to do all the work?'

This month, we are at last allowed to write about an interesting experiment which has investigated the subject of not just what cafe owners need, but how they like to be supplied.



Alice Rendle

The project is an online trade supply website created by Alice Rendle, managing director of Edgcumbes in Arundel. The point of it was not simply to sell – it was designed to give an understanding of how different caterers like to buy.

The first version of it was quietly put into operation as a 'value' website. Its parentage was not promoted, to avoid giving the impression that Edgcumbes, a full-service supplier, was turning into a discount house.

"I was cautious because the idea of 'value' conveys the idea of price being the main USP, and Edgcumbes is positioned as a quality offering," she told *Coffee House*. "I didn't want to confuse my offline offer with my online, until I knew better who my online customer was likely to be – now I have a better idea of this.

"We are only nine months into selling on the internet, and in this time I have learned a great deal about the 'buying motivators' (an American phrase!) of customers and the future for specialist wholesaling in this sector... I believe this is useful, as the landscape is changing hugely on the high street, and cafe owners are not immune from it."

The 'motivators' turn out not to be price alone, and the lessons learned, says Alice Rendle, are of the practical differences between catering buyers who need the full-service back-up of a knowledgeable supplier, and those who actively do not – but who still require an assurance of reliability.

"Our online prices are not ridiculously low, but lower than competitors if benchmarked against their minimum delivery charges." (There was a gentle swipe on the original site at trade suppliers who offer low headline prices but make up the difference from the delivery charge!)

"The 'motivators' are convenience and the chance to buy low quantities – I realise this because we find that people will pay for the delivery charge on a single box of jiggers or a chocolate shaker. They like the fact that we split boxes, and allow them to buy wholesale products in single quantities."

And who are these customers? One part of the site is clearly aimed at the typical office buyer, but the service is equally open to the tiny tea-room which needs to avoid large minimum-

quantity orders, or which has a late stock crisis.

"Many are individual consumers, but we are getting repeat orders from cafes, offices, restaurants, hair-dressers, etc. Returning customers are building up, which is a key thing – no-one returns online if they don't get the service they expect."

The next project will be a new online service, under a different name, and probably featuring Edgcumbe-branded items as a 'quality' option.

The experience, says Alice Rendle, has shown her how to identify the customers who need service, and those who don't, and handle each in the way that everyone finds most convenient.

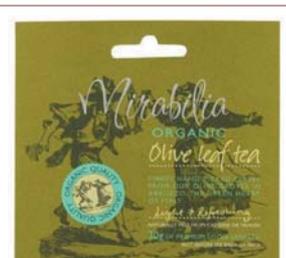
"Edgcumbes has customers who are with us after thirty years, and I am proud of this. However, competition is so fierce out there that price is now often the main element, which leaves a supplier little resource to offer advice and so on.

"We are changing to reflect this – we can now work more and more with those customers who really need our services.

"Those who don't need the benefit of our 30-year expertise are more suited to buying online, and we now gently point them to the website."



Following last month's report on the milk steaming jug with an inbuilt thermometer, this is the Smartpitcher, another Cream Supplies discovery



Here's an unusual beverage - Mirabilia is an olive leaf 'tea'. These leaves are (we are told) usually just burned and thrown away when they fall off the trees. One lady decided to slow-bake them to see what happened to them, as she did with her tomatoes, and discovered that when infused they make a distinctive tea. It is caffeine-free, and unlike many green or white teas, has no perfume to it.

Training continues to be a fraught subject in the beverage trade. A most interesting development is that the training standards which have appeared in the industry are not standing still – one way or another, the schemes are changing or being changed.

One of the most experienced trainers in the sector is Paul Meikle-Janney of Coffee Community, who has only recently published his newest guides, *The Barista's Workbook* and *Coffee in Construction*.

Paul has been involved in two of the UK's most significant training programmes: he was a primary influence in writing the City and Guilds VRQ, which has been solidly championed by the Beverage Standards Association, and recently he has been re-writing the SCAE barista exam.

"This has been re-structured into three layers," he says. "There's now foundation, intermediate (which is what you'd expect of a good shop barista after about six months) and professional, which gets into the science of understanding coffee. This qualification should be what makes an employer think: 'yes, that vouches for their skill!'"

Was the City and Guilds not supposed to do that? This is the course which first got barista work taken seriously by the wider world, in that once the VRQ standard was established, it was adopted by catering colleges.

"The C&G, when it is well taught, is a good and rigorous exam, and I learned

Training – finding the things that are needed



Jonathan Wadham of Rombouts

a lot from working on it" returns Paul firmly. "In the SCAE one, we have come to an even more thought-through approach, insisting that the standards required in the barista world are now hundred-per-cent demonstrated before a pass, to the degree that we can now virtually grade the quality of their steamed milk. This is going to be ground-breaking!"

The reference to 'when the C&G is well taught' was not an accidental one.

The Beverage Standards Association has worked hard with its member companies to establish a series of approved training centres where the C&G is acknowledged to be well handled... but, curiously, there is now a question-mark over it elsewhere.

"The weakness is in who trains it," says Paul Meikle-Janney carefully. "This is not about the companies involved with the BSA, but at certain colleges. The standard in some places appears to have been 'relaxed' so much that there are now some teachers who would possibly fail!"

That is not all. Something even more odd has cropped up – the C&G course has been 'pirated'.

"The 'patent', or 'rights' to that training are now out of time, and we have seen another version of a qualification appear," reports Paul. "It is not the City and Guilds course, but a copy, and we know that, because they have used phrases which we created for the C&G! The copy has a very vague curriculum – so vague that you could argue that making an instant coffee would pass."

"It seems the requirements could be satisfied by 'insert spoon, boil kettle... check that powder has dissolved!'"

The best course, it is now suggested, is to seek a training centre through the BSA.

Meanwhile, some companies who have worked with the C&G have moved on from it to develop their own work, while still expressing approval of what the VRQ course does. Typically, Rombouts credits the C&G with being the basis for its own recent training work.

(Rombouts still offers the C&G – if a client wishes the VRQ qualification, they simply bring in another accredited trainer to do the paperwork.)

"We are no longer an accredited C&G centre," says training manager

Jonathan Wadham. "We started with it as a way to learn more about coffee and it was a great introduction for us. It encouraged us to find out more and this led to the SCAE courses and training programmes."

The idea of a brand like Rombouts needing to learn about coffee is an intriguing one. There is a reason.

"Our attitude to training comes from the journey we went on ourselves," says managing director Rob Briggs. "When our brand was taken back by the Rombouts family, it had been neglected by the previous owner. In 2007 we decided we needed to learn a lot more about coffee, and our first port of call was the BSA. And as soon as you start re-learning your basics, you find out what you don't know!"

"We realised what we were now being exposed to – we suddenly began to really understand coffee."

"And then we realised that people in pubs and hotels were not being exposed to this at all!"

This had a remarkable effect on the way that the European parent company viewed its British trade.

"We got to the position where we went over to Belgium to say to them – this is the journey we are going through with our customers, and this is what we need you to understand about our business in the UK."

"Did that go down well? Initially... no!"

However, say the Rombouts team, the City and Guilds course provided the way to explain the British trade to a European brand.

"In Belgium, espresso is drunk in a different way, more like an Americano. We need a 30ml espresso here, and we needed their understanding of how to produce it for the UK – they were tasting it for the larger size of drink."

"Following the C&G approach got us away from appearing to tell them how to run their business and roast their coffee. They began to see how the UK was different, and how open we are in communication with our customers."

The next step was to develop its own relevant training.

The Rombouts training room is a working café (it is their old exhibition stand) and Jonathan Wadham has created a new course based on what he has learned from the C&G, the SCAE, what has been discussed with the Belgians, and what has been discussed with customers.

"What Jonathan has created is a modular transfer into something that our customer wants," says Rob Briggs. "We have effectively picked out the

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knowledge which is genuinely worthwhile. Generally, you must find out what basic practical things will actually make a difference to your customers.

"Coffee shops tend to have the better knowledge to start with. Pubs and restaurants say they know they want to up their game in coffee – but in pubs, they don't necessarily like making coffee. It's harder than pulling a pint. So we have to place more importance on these places, because it's still our name on the cup... we have to wrap our training in a way that makes them want to take it on.

"We now pick a coffee champion at each venue. This is very valuable – we delivered training to one hotel where one person really got it, to the degree that he was stopping problems before they could arise. As soon as his peer group saw this, they got it, too."

“ I would like to see the government recognise that training in this industry is a success story. It should be recognised that the country can be proud of this industry.

- Angus McKenzie, Kimbo

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Something that Rombouts has also judged is 'what needs to be told'. Essentially, not everyone needs to be trained to east London standards.

"The level of attention of detail paid to coffee by some parts of the trade is the snowflake on the tip of the iceberg, compared to what the great majority of the trade is doing. We admire these people – but it's not what we need to teach all our trade customers.

"It can be pointless taking training to the next stage for the sake of it, not because it does someone some good in their beverage business. We have now learned that we don't have to pass on everything we know... because they may not need to know it. There's a difference in approach between 'passion' and the person who's just doing it for a day job."

Curiously, laughs Rob Briggs, this has taught Rombouts something about the order in which training sessions must be done.

"If Jonathan begins training with latte art, they go 'wow' – and it wrecks the rest of the session. If their attention is on the design on top of the coffee, then their attention is not on the taste... so now Jonathan has to leave his latte art to the very end!"

The new forms of training available to the cafe trade should not be underestimated, comes another view.

"I'm a fan of the City and Guilds," says Angus McKenzie, managing

director at Kimbo UK, and operator of a C&G-status training room. "The inherent challenge of the course is this – it is designed to get people to pass, at the age of 16 or 17. If a lot of people do well, that doesn't mean it's a bad course – it means it's a very flexible course.

"This is not a bad thing, because we are talking about people who have not had much chance to achieve any success or respect, and we are now finding that everybody is genuinely doing well. If you take a classroom of 16-17 year-olds, this can put them into an environment where they can handle ingredients properly, prepare them properly, and respect customer-service practice.

"The first stage was all about getting it up and running, and now may be the time to raise it further. Perhaps there should now be an obligation that tutors should have to share best practice every two or three years. It might now be a good idea for City and Guilds to establish a league table, to see just how well colleges are doing...I certainly think it should be shown how many thousand people have gone through this course, and I would like to see the government recognise that this is a success story. It should be recognised that the country can be proud of this industry."

Kimbo is one of the companies which has extended the C&G course to suit itself.

"I have been sceptical about the C&G in seeing some trainers getting the accreditation but saying 'we'll just do the one and two-day courses'. We don't - we really are doing a lot of the full three-day courses. A great buzz goes through our office for those three days, and we always seem to keep booking them in month after month."

How can the C&G be adapted?

"It's easy to upgrade the whole syllabus, and that's what we do. We always go out of our way to have samples of any different coffees from different roasters, which is very unusual for an Italian coffee brand, and we'll have teas too... it all helps broaden their horizons.

"And what we teach, which many trainers don't, is this – if you get hit with 'three lattes, two cappuccinos, a flat white and two hot chocolates'... what do you do? This will happen, so we include it right from the beginning."

(The same technique appears in Paul Meikle-Janney's new publication of the *Barista's Workbook*.)

"Yes, you can find a lot of highbrow coffee learning – but this is not about worshipping an espresso machine. This is about understanding coffee, in a way that lets you get a slice of the business action.

"If you wonder whether training has relevance to you... then you're probably staying too much inside your comfort zone. This is your one chance to make that big difference!"



Beverage Standards Association

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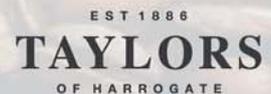
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The value of individual or 'signature' drinks to a coffee house was reinforced again last month when the Da Vinci brand held a recipe seminar to promote its Theatre of Great Tastes, which is its collection of flavoured syrups, sauces and smoothie mixes.

The demonstrator was barista trainer Paul Meikle-Janney of Coffee Community, who has an interesting history in creating flavoured signature drinks, for both competition use and for menus.

According to Da Vinci, research has said that consumers like to see new drink ideas appearing every couple of months – so what should they be?

The important thing about flavours, Meikle-Janney told Da Vinci's audience, is that they can be used in a variety of different ways, hot and cold, and can range from the simple to the sophisticated.

"I once worked with an American chain whose vanilla and caramel latte outsold everything else - and the one of the things about these flavours is that they can equally well be made cold. A couple of scoops of a good ice cream, and you've turned it into a good summer signature drink.

"The most simple and very cooling drink is to mix a syrup with sparkling water – this gives you a kind of adult cordial. You can start your morning menu with a passionfruit drink like this.

"At the other end is the shakerato. This is a classic chilled espresso – in a high end coffee bar in Milan, you would expect to drink one while you sit watching the world go by.

"Chilled coffee can go a bit sour, so we have to balance it with a bit of sweetness - so we have a little vanilla syrup in there, and give it a quick shake with some ice.

"The nice thing about this is that it does come out looking like an espresso, and if you serve it in a martini glass, you have the beginnings of your non-alcoholic version of the espresso martini – this is the sophisticated end of the flavoured coffee drink." (The

The sales appeal of a sticky-toffee pudding coffee



Paul Meikle-Janney and the shakerato - stylish, profitable, but quick and simple

ingredients are simply espresso, vanilla syrup, and ice).

There is an extremely practical reason for using products like Da Vinci's smoothie mix, said Meikle-Janney – economy and cost control.

"There is a lot of work involved in a fresh smoothie – it can be tricky, it can be expensive, and sometimes you feel like you're working your way through the whole fruit bowl. The smoothie mix product portion-controls itself. When deciding whether to use products like this, think about your shelf life - you really do not want to spend the end of the day throwing away fresh materials which will hit your bottom line.

"The Da Vinci smoothie mix is a standard product, but you may not wish to do just the same mix as everyone else, so maybe for a fruit smoothie you might put a little grenadine in the bottom for a slightly more dramatic look. You may simply wish to add a little coconut syrup for a nice signature combination."

Although Meikle-Janney was nominally working for Da Vinci, he attracted a lot of interest with a most unexpected product in making recommendations about mochas and hot chocolate drinks.

"You can create a good chocolate featuring a non-Kerry product - Horlicks!

"When I was working a bar in Yorkshire, a favourite product was a comforting chocolate mousse, which included Horlicks. For a coffee bar drink, we can use Da Vinci chocolate syrup as well - you'll find a couple of spoons of Horlicks melts very easily with a couple of pumps of chocolate syrup, and you have no worry about that risk of powder remaining."

(The malted chocolate frappe uses Horlicks, chocolate sauce, ice cream and milk, all blended together).

Signature drinks can have their appealing selling points, noted Meikle-Janney.

"Mochas are one of the most popular drinks for flavouring, and they can work very well - but they are done a lot, so it is a very good thing to be a bit different. With the espresso, if you replace the chocolate syrup with a caramel one, you can do a take on a sticky toffee pudding - the 'pudding' bit comes from a little gingerbread syrup."

There is, he noted, a wonderful selling point.

"Have you ever seen the calorie count of a sticky toffee pudding? This comes nowhere near it!"



An extremely unusual themed coffee house has opened in Minneapolis - it is the Lavvu Coffee House, the USA's only Sami-themed and owned coffee shop. If the word Sami is unfamiliar, they are the indigenous people of northern Scandinavia, and most northerly traditional people of Europe... and they are also known as Laplanders. Their traditional hunting accommodation is the Lavvu, a kind of tent or tepee almost identical to the one seen in Indian camps in westerns, but apparently more stable in arctic conditions, and one of these dominates a corner of the café. There is a conventional coffee menu, but the baristas are also trained in Sami-style coffee - this is allowed to boil, 'ferociously', then cooled, then boiled again and mixed with spices and salt. The owner has told his local press that 'no Sami in his right mind would not have a pot of coffee ready to be served anywhere'.

Unusual as it may sound, Solo Cup has produced the Soup Report. This goes farther than simply recording favourite flavours (Butternut Squash and Spicy Moroccan are getting popular, apparently), but finds that the quality of takeaway packaging is something that consumers recognise. Hand comfort, a secure fitting lid and a rigid container that doesn't sag were all ranked as 'very important' to consumers; the use of recyclable material was an important consideration.

Do blended drinks work in all coffee bars?

Why is it that many of the cool espresso bars don't use blenders, or sell any kind of shake or smoothie product? To what degree do blended drinks, and smoothie and frappe products, have a place on the coolest of modern menus?

And do these drinks actually help the business of a coffee bar?

"A lot of venues still see 'great coffee' as a labour of love, and to a degree, these operators see the blended drinks as the frou-frou drinks, the 'candy' drinks," observes Gary McGann of Beyond the Bean.

"Starbucks started out as coffee-only - they realised that they needed to broaden to make it work, and look where they are now. The narrower your product range, the narrower your market.

"But the market for blended drinks is now growing faster than the speciality coffee places are, because these drinks are now mainstream."

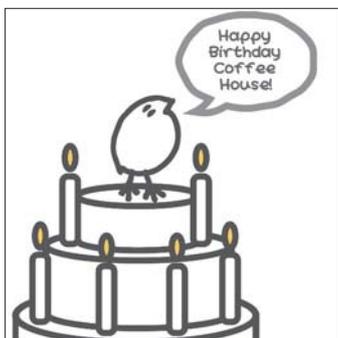
Beyond the Bean has attempted to encourage coffee-house owners to be imaginative with their blended drinks with its series of Sweetbird summer and winter drink booklets, and McGann has delivered seminars on the subject at Caffe Culture. Are café owners responding to this, and with what success?

"We have now seen the rise and demise of milkshake bars, and there are not many 'pure' smoothie bars left. What those specialists did was develop the market for everybody else... as a standalone, they couldn't make it work, and the people who went on to do the best out of smoothies are the chains, for whom it is an added product without too much additional expense."

The same, he says, applies to any coffee-based café. The 'drinks sorted' books are producing a positive response, and Beyond the Bean has now devised a similar and straightforward follow-up.

"Last Christmas we experimented with the 'in a box' promotion - we combined a couple of seasonal syrups, recipes, a measuring pump, and some point-of-sale material... and it really worked! After Christmas, we kept getting calls asking when the next one would be, so now we have an Easter box and a Summer box being planned.

"In that sense, the seasonal menu of blended drinks has worked for those who tried it.



"We are now seeing the enthusiasm for 'seasonal menus' elsewhere. We did a very successful one for Sodexo, the contract caterer, who have exactly the same menu-fatigue problem as everyone else. We put it in the box, they sent it to their units, and it worked."

The same principle can be seen throughout the beverage trade, says McGann.

"Look at the chains - Costa decides what their theme is, has all their campaign, their point-of-sale, their till pricing, ready... and bang, on the exact date, everything happens.

"OK, the independents don't have their resources - but our books and boxes certainly get them on the way."



We are beginning to get suspicious of all the themed café ideas turning up in Japan. This, we promise you, is the staff of Androidol, which 'features singing, dancing staff dressed as androids from the future'. The café is (we are told this, honestly) based on the concept that the android girls working as staff are not created with emotions and feelings, and need to be 'programmed' by interacting with customers. Twenty minutes 'programming' is 1,000 yen (£7)

We are always fascinated when we see a coffee-house project we've not come across before - and Café Blah Blahh in Hunstanton, which has just finished its first year's trading, is the only one we have come across to run a millinery academy. This is run by the local hatmaker Trishe Darling. Café Blah Blahh was set up by Andrew Waddison and Jamie Knight, who report that a curiosity of their town is that it is said to be the only place on the east coast of the UK where you can watch the sun set over the sea towards the rest of England (because of the shape of the coast, it is an east coast town that faces west).

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It is all very well for manufacturers to make all kinds of claims about the environmental suitability of their packaging products – but do caterers really understand the subject? Indeed, are most caterers very interested?

By far the most vocal company in the sector is Vegware, which has said firmly that it is against 'confusion marketing' in environmental products. Does that mean marketing which deliberately sets out to mislead customers in the sense that the seller knows that the information is incorrect, or does it mean that salesmen simply don't know what they're talking about?

"The biggest confusion we meet is over the term 'biodegradable', which in the context of waste management and recycling doesn't really mean much," remarks Vegware's Lucy Frankel. "A product needs to be 'compostable' in order to be able to go to food waste recycling."

"In any specialist area it takes time to develop real in-depth knowledge - compostable packaging is no exception, and that's where we fit in. Our approach is consultative selling. We come at things from a different perspective from most of the packaging industry as we help our clients put recycling programmes in place."

Vegware says that environmental packaging is a geeky subject, and that it tries to make it clear - but how can any packaging company do that without descending into technical language? Salesmen use the terms 'PLA' or 'CPLA' every day, and while some of

Compostable cups and lids - who knows what they're talking about?

The more we get to hear about the environmental aspects of takeaway packaging... the more cafe owners get left behind

them may know what these terms mean, the average café owner has far too many other things to bother about. Just how simple can the subject be made?

"The short answer is that we can just say that a product is compostable, explain how the recycling works, and then let the cafe owner leave us to worry about materials."

"The longer answer is that paper coffee cups are made from paper board with some form of lining to ensure they are leakproof."

"Most cups use a plastic lining (PE) and as such are not compostable. Disposal is landfill (worst option), incineration (second worst option) or some recyclers may accept them for recycling together with card."

"But if a paper coffee cup is lined with corn starch, then it can be composted together with food waste, or recycled together with card. That means a compostable cup has two good places it can go after use - in food waste recycling, it creates compost which can be used in farming. In card recycling, cups typically go to low-grade card, turned into a formed pulp product such as cup



Lucy Frankel

carry-trays.

"PLA is corn starch, an eco-friendly replacement for oil-based plastic. We use it to make clear cold cups and deli containers. CPLA is the same material but has gone through an additional process to increase its heat resistance - that's why we use it to make hot cup lids and cutlery. 'Bio-plastic' means a 'plastic' made from plants."

"So, paper cups lined with corn starch, not plastic, can be recycled together with card or with food waste. Lids, if compostable, can be recycled with food waste."

Here, says Vegware, it helps to know a very brief amount of terminology.

'Compostable' means a finished product which can bio-degrade in under 12 weeks - that is quick enough to be included in food waste recycling.

'Bio-degradable' means it can break down with microbes, warmth and moisture, but there are no guarantees about how long this may take - "a log cabin is biodegradable, but is far too thick to compost in under 12 weeks together with food waste," observes Lucy Frankel.

'Recyclable' generally refers to something which can go to dry recycling, such as card recycling.

'Degradable', says Vegware, is a very confusing term, often used to describe oil-based plastics which have an additive to make them come apart

into lots of little tiny bits of plastic. These little flakes of plastic can still harm the environment.

Simply, and in the most basic terms, what questions should the average café owner ask of a potential supplier, in order to establish whether that supplier actually knows what they're talking about?

"Why is it the very best way I can present or serve my product? What is it made of and are the materials sustainable? How do I recycle it? What help or advice can you offer with disposal?"

How likely is it that different brands are actually selling the same product? Realistically, how many different products are there on the market?

"Natureworks dominates the PLA market, though there are quite a few options when it comes to paper stock. There are actually quite a few different products, and most are not off-the-shelf - a supplier will normally provide the specification for the product in terms of card weight, thickness of lining, type of outer wall in a double wall or ripple cup and so on. This means that two UK companies could share a supplier, though have different products."

A fascinating forthcoming item is the Scottish Waste Regulations. The rest of the UK may not be in the least interested in a Scottish regulation... unless, as is suspected, this is the first step in something which may spread and become familiar throughout the UK.

"In January 2014, all businesses must recycle paper, cardboard, glass, plastic and metal. Food businesses, including cafes, will be required to have separate food waste recycling - that's by January 2014 for those producing 50 kilos per week (about 100 litres of food waste) and by 2016 for those producing over 5kg per week, which is roughly a kitchen caddy's worth."

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"We helped a brew pub reduce its general waste by around 90 per cent and be ready. It used to recycle glass and cans, with everything else going in the general waste. Our recycling consultant Eilidh Brunton conducted a waste audit and cost analysis, and saw some easy changes to make. She found that by introducing food waste recycling and recycling paper, card and plastics, they could save a little money per week... and they can also claim to be Scotland's first zero-waste pub!

"Any UK cafe or any business can pop their postcode into the free enquiry form at www.foodwastenetwork.org.uk and be matched with trade services in their area. Scottish businesses will have to go zero waste, but there are all sorts of benefits for cafes.

"The environmental health people who visit cafes to check hygiene anyway will be making sure that businesses are complying. I have been told that there will be a period of gentle reprimands for non-compliance whilst people are still getting to grips with the idea, but then a little further down the line when businesses really have no excuse, there may be fines in place, possibly some naming and shaming."

Is this going a bit far? No, says Vegware - this is the realistic very near future.

"It's not bureaucratic nonsense - it's a very sensible use of increasingly scarce and expensive resources. Why cut down more trees just to send cardboard boxes to landfill? Why mine new metals when we can recycle what is already here in the UK?"

Several in the trade were intrigued last month when Tri-Star announced that it had achieved a breakthrough – the UK's first plant-based cup lid for hot drinks that can be composted by consumers at home.

The 'revolutionary' lid, said the company, was notable 'because other so-called sustainable hot cup lids are made of plastic and have to be composted industrially'.

This put several other suppliers into a tizzy. One other cup maker commented: "plastic can't be composted at all, and there's nothing wrong with industrial composting."

The Tri-Star lid is manufactured from a sugar cane pulp known as bagasse, which is well-known and widely-used in the packaging industry. The lid is said to be capable of withstanding temperatures of up to 100°C without distorting, going soft or popping off, and is also microwave-proof. It is said to compost naturally in 'only a few months'.

The company's promotional material added, encouragingly: 'adding this new home-compostable lid to your hot drinks packaging inventory is a small step that could have a huge impact on both the planet and your profits'.

However, rivals were not enthusiastic about bagasse for a lid – one said: 'it's fine if you like sucking cardboard'.

The product itself turns out to come from the Paper Cup Company of Lancashire, which has exclusive distribution of the lid in Europe.

"Yes, bagasse lids have been around

Home composting - how big an issue is it?



The Tri-Star cup and lid

based material, which took around twelve months in development – early lid prototypes were brittle and kept cracking in transportation, so the finished product was around twelve months in development."

Do cup lids actually get recovered, or do all lids end up in landfill bins, whatever they are made of? At London Bio-Packaging, Marcus Hill reports a remarkable project during the Olympics, in which he successfully reclaimed ten million of them.

"Ours is PLA, which is plant-based compostable 'plastic' - it's more of a 'solid' material than a pulped one, which is good for many products, but we think doesn't have the rigidity and sturdiness you need for a lid. When you look at hot-drink lids, you cannot cut corners - you must avoid leakage."

The Olympics project proved that consumers will dispose of products properly if they can.

"It was a closed loop, in that you couldn't bring any packaging not approved into the area, and all catering items had to be compostable and collected – so we had specially-coloured bins. On the packaging, we printed the logo which identified the bin, and yes, people did put things in the right bins.

"When the public knew what to do with it, and it was clearly made easy for them - they did it."

awhile, but we have not found one with adequate lid-fit till now," commented the company's Mark Woodward. "Bagasse lids by their nature will have a feel and smell of cardboard – however, it is proving popular as a replacement for EPS food boxes, especially in stadia catering."

Will these lids actually reach home composting? A problem here is that the concept of home composting has not yet been widely encouraged, observes Mark Woodward reasonably. "If this was dropped as litter, it would disappear in a few weeks – but a certain benefit of it is that bagasse is not using up valuable resources."

Interest in this kind of product remains high – Planglow reports that last year, it sold close to two million compostable cups and nearly a million lids.

"Ours are a fairly unique offering as some of the first compostable products on the market," says Planglow. "Our bio lids are made from a certified corn-

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Time magazine, no less, has allowed itself some concealed sarcasm at the expense of Starbucks, which launched 'its first permanent addition to the menu in 16 years'. In 'a coffee coup for the history books', noted Time, the new hazelnut macchiato will, like Starbucks' caramel macchiato, be made with vanilla syrup, milk, a layer of foam and espresso on top, but – wait for it! said Time – the new drink will be topped with a drizzle of hazelnut sauce instead of caramel. The international magazine's cynicism is not surprising – it has often been observed that Starbucks' media information goes too far over the top to be taken seriously. In this case, the American brand president said: "Starbucks baristas use the world's finest espresso to craft each beverage by hand, with unparalleled passion and expertise... no beverage better demonstrates this level of craftsmanship than our signature four-layered macchiato."

The computer industry has been having fun recalling an infamous practical joke played by the founder of Apple, the late Steve Jobs, in 2007. In front of thousands of people at a trade conference, he unveiled for the first time an i-phone, and demonstrated it by calling a branch of Starbucks, and saying: "I'd like to order 4,000 lattes to go, please." Six years later, a computer trade paper has discovered that the barista who took the call still works there... and not surprisingly, she hasn't forgotten it.

An American consumer website has made the interesting allegation that a chain of tea retailers has misled consumers by brewing sample cups at a greater strength than normal. The Consumerist site alleged that a former member of staff at the Teavana chain has admitted brewing tea at up to 12 times the normal strength, to give consumers the impression that the tea is tastier than it



Kaldi

In honour of the goatherd's birthday, we have given him this month's entire back page. Kaldi's book, Coffee-House Capers, is still available - e-mail the editor!

is. Another American paper had previously alleged that the reason that some expensive loose-leaf tea did not taste the same when consumers took it home was because baristas had fiddled the brewing of instore samples. This, complained the paper, 'tricks customers who are hesitant to splurge on overpriced loose-leaf tea into thinking they can brew tea that tastes like the store samples, for one-third less than it actually costs'. The paper reported many consumers who had been given free samples to taste, bought packs to take home as a result, and experienced a less than satisfactory result. The paper's reporter said that if the tea were brewed at home to the same recipe as the samples, it would effectively cost \$9.12 per cup.

Readers may remember we recently reported

on the Faces café in County Durham, which uses the interesting theme of celebrating local criminals. The owner has now devised a publicity stunt challenge in which customers are invited to try the venue's special breakfast, which features six fried eggs, eight-egg cheese and potato omelettes, 12 rashers of bacon, 12 sausages, chips, mushrooms, six hash browns, six black puddings, beans, tomatoes, four slices of bread and butter, four slices of fried bread and four slices of toast. It amounts to 6,000 calories, costs £15, and any customer finishing one inside an hour can have it for free. The owner says that six people try it every day, and three quarters of a million people have viewed an internet site about it... but so far, nobody has finished it.

There has been an unexpected story from the recent worldwide fad for 'cat cafes', in which customers can stroke pets while they drink tea. Two women stole an expensive cat from the delightfully-named Miao Wu Club cat cafe in Xujiahui, China, but were recorded on CCTV when one put it into her handbag. They were fined the equivalent of \$641, but escaped being jailed because they confessed, returned that cat, and apparently treated it well... they took it for flea treatment!

A coffee-house in Arrowtown, New Zealand, has recently suffered the theft of its morning's bakery stock. These are usually delivered from a local bakery at 3am, and taken in by the early shift. On checking the CCTV records, the local police saw a black Labrador dog make several deliberate visits to the bakery pile, every time walking away with a mouthful of bread. In all, it took \$60-worth of bread, doughnuts and bagels - police said they would like to hear from a pet-owner 'who now has a rather larger dog'.

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From Sweetbird and the team at Beyond the Bean - here's to another ten years on the cover!

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