

Boughton's

COFFEE HOUSE

June 2013

Fairtrade says – time to support the coffee sector

The Fairtrade Foundation, whose annual awareness Fortnight in the spring has never really fulfilled its possible potential with regard to either the promotion of hot beverages or the support of the cafe trade, is to run a second event this autumn concentrating solely on ethically-sourced coffee. The Foundation is taking the event sufficiently seriously to say that its backing will be 'a media spend twice that of Fairtrade Fortnight'.

The campaign is a two-week one in September and October, and the major incentive to attract public attention is the opportunity to win a trip to an exotic coffee-growing origin (which we think is Peru).

The event is being led by the organisation's product manager Kate Lewis, who agrees that trade support is a change of emphasis for Fairtrade, whose promotional work in the past has concentrated more on consumer recognition of the Fairtrade Mark than on working together with the beverage trade. The new awareness campaign is intended to both promote the concept of Fairtrade coffee, and promote the coffee trade in the eyes of the public.

"A lot of our story up to now has been consumer-focused, and the consumers want the touchy-feely stories – but the trade wants to know about productivity and quality and promotion," she acknowledges. "It is a consumer-facing campaign, but to be used as a tool for catering businesses.

"For the public, the theme is to buy a Fairtrade product, get a code, go to the website, and win a trip to origin. There is a celebrity involvement – the consumer views online a film of the celebrity, and has to guess where they are.

"We are doing it because the trade has asked us to communicate the Fairtrade coffee message. We have tried to make this eminently suitable for independent coffee-shops, and the requirement from them is limited – we



Kate Lewis

are providing the free point-of-sale material. We have really taken on board trade feedback, and this is the coffee-specific campaign they wanted... their feedback now suggests that the trade likes the format."

Operators taking part in the scheme do not have to buy promotional materials or undertake any administrative work – marketing materials are ready-printed and pre-coded.

However, trade suppliers we have spoken to have so far not been sufficiently prepared to be able to tell us how they intend to manage the campaign through their supply routes.

(Although the new campaign is said to have twice the backing spend of Fairtrade Fortnight, the Foundation has declined to tell us exactly what this is!)



This really is one of our favourite commercials in support of flavoured syrups, and it was created by Da Vinci in Australia for their sponsorship of the world barista championship. With admirable humour, the brand did not take its support of the world's major coffee contest too seriously, and created a video advertisement which contained a lovely gentle dig at the elitist coffee attitude. The film shows a much tattooed and ear-ringed Aussie barista being poured an espresso by a colleague who lectures him with tasting notes and tells him to expect 'notes of caramel'. He tastes it and is not impressed... so he waits till the fellow-barista is out of sight, adds a drop of Da Vinci, looks at the camera and says 'now it tastes of caramel!'

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Inside...

FLAVOURS FOR SUMMER

... and combining product formats

Page 6



PADDY & SCOTTS

... and the PM's advisor on enterprise

Page 8



TEA

... the summer of the bubble?

Begins page 10



TRAINING

... a fascinating new

e-book

Page 6

NELSON
Heavy-duty crockery, glass and dishwashing machines



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The Allegra European Coffee Symposium this year will be in Paris, on 27-28 November. There will be the customary study tour of Paris' new and top coffee venues.

There is to be yet another coffee-related exhibition – the Casual Dining show will be held by the organisers of the Lunch! Show, at the Business Design Centre in London on the 26-27 February 2014. This is aimed at the high-street eating market which is estimated to be worth £5 billion. Some familiar names in the coffee sector, such as Kimbo, Magrini, Nelson warewashing and the Handmade Cake Company, have booked to exhibit.

The outcry in Wellington, Somerset, over an application for the town's ninth coffee shop has been followed by a refusal from the local council, who said that even the filling of an otherwise empty site would adversely affect the viability of the town's primary shopping area. The petition against 'another coffee shop' attracted 1,400 signatures. One protesting group said that 'a town cannot be a monoculture'.

A study in Colombia has concluded that 1,000 farmers growing coffee under Nespresso's AAA sustainable quality programme have achieved a net income more than 40 per cent higher than those not on the scheme.

The Robert Roberts coffee brand from Ireland is reported in the local press to have invested €350,000 in a new roaster... the intriguing aspect of the story is that it is reportedly their first such investment since 1989!

The Chatterbox café in County

Durham has created a rather unusual feature - a Man Hour. Owners Cameron and Anne Marie Gordon, who opened up last month, said that the idea is to encourage conversation between men in the area: the local press reports them as explaining: "conversations between men in Weardale usually follow the same pattern - one will say 'alright', the other will reply 'aye', and then that's it." Another odd idea is their French breakfast weekend discount - a customer can wear up to three items of French clothing, such as beret, Gallic moustache or striped shirt, and each will qualify for a ten per cent discount. The cafe space is shared with their Originals art shop.

In an equally bizarre discount promotion, a café in Sydney has offered to give free coffee to couples who complete a romantic kiss at the point of purchase. Some single customers have enquired whether they could kiss the staff instead.

HM Revenue & Customs says it has made its first charges of tax fraud against fast-food businesses alleged to be failing to declare income or profits - the first charges were raised in Scotland. HMRC said that it has task forces undertaking 'intensive bursts of activity targeting specific high-risk trade sectors', of which the takeaway trade is one. When this magazine asked a direct question about whether coffee-houses count as 'high-risk' targets, and might therefore be assumed to be part of this project, HMRC gave an oblique reply which we can only interpret as 'yes'.

Heated arguments and ice-cold ads

Costa Coffee has created more than the usual month's amount of community complaints and protests with its recent openings. These include Saxmundham, where, in an interesting reflection of the current state of the British high street, it is reportedly in a block made up of a Tesco, a book-makers, and a charity shop. Although its opening in nearby Southwold caused protests which made the national news, the Saxmundham opening is reported 'to have received relatively little objection'.

Rather unusually, community groups in Westbury-on-Trym have complained about a Costa self-service machine in the local Co-op supermarket. It is reported that a meeting with the supermarket management resulted in a 'heated' exchange of views, with residents complaining that the installation constituted unfair competition to local traders - they have distributed posters reading 'Unfair Trade'. The store manager said it was only there on trial.

Even more unusually, the council in Basingstoke are reportedly considering paying £800,000 to lease a Costa drive-through. The council has apparently said it will make its money back in eleven years by charging a franchisee £64,000 a year in rent, but opponents called the idea 'ludicrous'.

Costa has opened in Ripon, despite months of campaigning by local businesses. The local development manager has arranged to meet Costa bosses to 'discuss the company's role in the city'. In Haxby, Yorkshire, local

retailers have complained about the proposed arrival of the brand, saying it would not support local producers, as existing cafes do. Costa responded with its usual statement about wanting to be part of the community. In Minehead, the conservation society chairman has also formally objected to a Costa application.

Costa is also reported to be opening in Great Malvern town centre, in Port Glasgow, Swindon, and in Colwyn Bay. It will open in Wanstead, despite reportedly having told the local paper that it had no plans to do so... and yet having applied for permission for signage! The Wanstead Society chairman objected to the signs as being inappropriate for a conservation area. He said: "I'm disappointed but not surprised."

Costa is testing 'thermal activated' advertising signs on the London Underground, in support of iced drinks. The ads will automatically 'go live' when the temperature reaches 22 degrees.

Suspended coffee and the tourist trade

The 'suspended coffee' story continues to run and run - now, the local paper in Newham reports that, unlikely as it may sound, a Japanese film crew 'flew in to film a programme about the scheme' at Coffee7 in Forest Gate, which the paper also says was the first café in London to introduce the idea. The café owner says that he has now received messages from Japan from tourists who intend to visit him.

Elsewhere, Aida and John Stephens of Whipped and Baked in Chichester have created a scheme in which customers can donate £1, redeemable to those who have been given 'coffee cards' by the local homeless charity Stonepillow. A jar of marbles on the counter illustrates how many free coffees are available.

A Belfast café which has adopted the custom of letting the customer pay whatever price they think fair has reported that the idea is working so well that it has extended the scheme. The Dock Cafe, a faith-based community coffee shop in the Titanic Quarter, simply asks patrons to put whatever they feel is appropriate into their honesty box. After fifteen months, one of the ministers who runs the café says that while some customers are believed to be generous, and while it is assumed that some are not, nobody ever knows - and no customer is ever embarrassed by not having enough money.

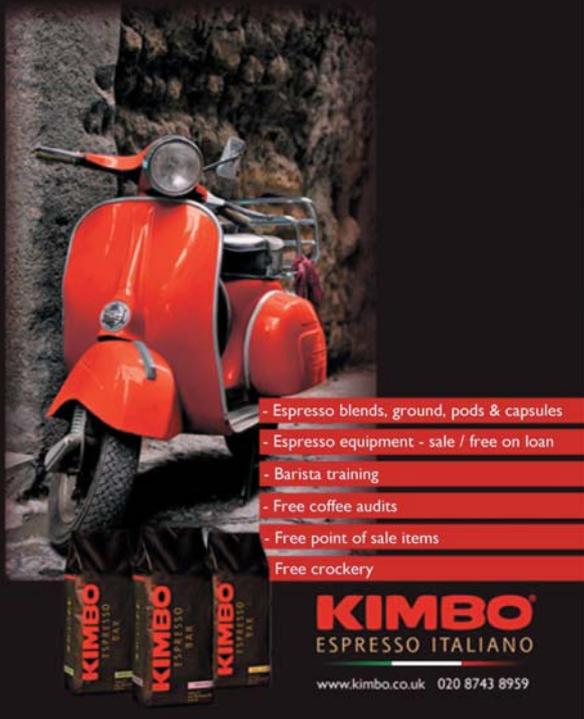
The Beverage Service Association's awards have received 211 entries for this year, and from a wider range of beverage-serving businesses. The total was effectively boosted by backing from both Jaguar Espresso Systems, which had promised to sponsor a hundred entries, and Kimbo, which said it would underwrite two dozen.

Jaguar exceeded their target, and paid for 119 entries. Kimbo also increased its figure, sponsoring 29, adding that this year it has seen a 'real mix' of coffee-serving venues, from coffee shops to pubs and restaurants. "The spread of entries is much wider than last year, with a dramatic increase in the number of entries from Scotland," said the BSA.

There has been a quite remarkable amount of comment after the *Guardian* newspaper decided to open its own coffee house in London, under the name #guardian. The paper opened the café in Shoreditch, near its own offices, and gets its coffee from the local Nude roastery.

Many cafe operators have been scornful, but the journalism fraternity have generally acknowledged the *Guardian's* move in making it easier for the public to connect with the paper and its writers. It is not the first such venture - the *Winnipeg Free Press* in Manitoba, Canada opened the News Cafe two years ago, and the newspaper does live interviews there. The *Torrington Register Citizen* in Connecticut did something similar in 2010, but a Czech project to create a 'hyperlocal' chain of papers linked with coffee shops did not work.

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Probably the most imaginative presentation of a signature drink in this year's world barista finals was that by Colin Harmon of Ireland, who actually bottled his drink in front of the judges. It was malted barley, hops, water, cherry, fresh pressed apple juice, espresso and CO2, which created a 'coffee stout'. He served it to the judges in a four-pack take-away holder, and gave them bottle-openers. Although the British and Irish entrants reached the final stage, the world title went to the USA.

(Pic courtesy of the WBC organisers in Melbourne).

Gluten-free cake mixes and 'free-from' mallows

There have been a couple of interesting product launches for operators who seriously cater for the 'free-from' sector.

Honeybuns, the farm-based bakery which supplies many coffee shops, says it has set new standards for those who wish to serve gluten-free cakes – it has now launched a sponge cake mix, which is intended to be the first of three gluten-free baking mixes.

Honeybuns tell us that the mix has "a nuttiness and slightly caramelised flavour, owing to the use of ground flaxseed and brown sugar respectively. It will give anyone the possibility of being able to rustle up a sumptuous and delicious gluten free sponge cake – simply add butter and eggs."

The mixes come in neat retro-design card tubes. It is the Honeybuns team which recently published a full recipe book with advice on serving gluten-free items.

Elsewhere, there have always been arguments as to whether marshmallow is a legitimate addition to a coffee or hot chocolate drink, but a new development has arrived with the launch of what is called a 'free-from' mallow, using all-natural flavours.

Marshmallow was originally formed from a plant extract, but for mass commercial purposes is now produced using various additives. Freedom Mallows, from Freedom Confectionery, is aimed at what is said to be an increasing number of consumers looking for sweets that do not contain gelatine. They are also fat and dairy-free, suitable for vegetarians, vegans, consumers with intolerances and those seeking halal or kosher products.

Rather enthusiastically, the Vegetarian Society has said: "We can confirm that vegetarians are very excited by this launch – vegetarian marshmallows are a much sought-after product."



The image of the tattooed barista has passed into contemporary culture, but the Mail reports that a barista in a Yorkshire department store's in-house coffee shop has been sacked because customers complained about her tattoos. The barista said she offered to wear long-sleeved clothes for concealment, but was told that would be 'unhygienic'.

Cafe boss's Wonderland in Llandudno

An experienced coffee-house owner is behind an ambitious plan to develop the tourist industry in Llandudno, based on the town's connection with Alice in Wonderland – Alice Liddell, the girl who inspired the story, had a family holiday home there back in the mid-1800s. The opportunity has cropped up for a tea brand to ally itself with the venture.

The coffee-shop owner leading the project is Barry Mortlock, who first had the Badgers Tea Rooms in the town, and was then consultant on the Coffee Culture café inside Waterstone's bookshops. He and his partners have now started the wonderland.co.uk website, has bought exhibits from an old Alice-themed visitor centre, and are working on plans to open a visitor attraction.

The local beverage trade has begun getting involved, he tells us – some cafes and hotels have begun running themed Alice tea parties, for which he has supplied the Wonderland characters in costume, who are professional actors.

There is also an Alice Day, and the theory is that a tea brand might be found as a major sponsor (a jam-tart baker was considered, but has yet to materialise!)

"The Alice Day attracts TV coverage, and we are already in the process of creating an educational package for schools, hoping they will in future support the event," he tells us. "A Liverpool school trialled it this year and found it a great success.

"The year 2015 is a key anniversary, the 150th year of the book, and we have plans for an event on the same day as Alice Liddell's actual birthday, May 4th."

His Badgers and Coffee Culture cafes have given way to the new venture.

"We have now closed our coffee shops, though we still offer consultancy in this field. We were asked by Waterstones to create their in-house coffee shop concept, and their first Café W was launched in 2011 in Sutton, before they began rolling out the concept more widely.

"Wonderland came about after a lady founded a

museum called 'Down the Rabbit Hole' in Llandudno in the late 80's. The rabbit hole was a basement, where visitors encountered ten scenes from the Alice stories. It proved popular, until the lady retired at 77 and the artefacts were put into storage.

"We saw the chance in Alice-linked opportunities and bought the contents. By this time the council had realised the town had no connections left with Alice in Wonderland and called us to a meeting which resulted in us becoming sort of business partners to produce a state-of-the-art tour, the first digital town trail in the UK, using the very latest 'augmented reality'.

"So we now have Alice in Wonderland Ltd, and also we have created a social enterprise company called A.L.I.C.E (Alice Liddell's Innovative Community Enterprise) for the community's benefit. It's all about to happen... we hope!"

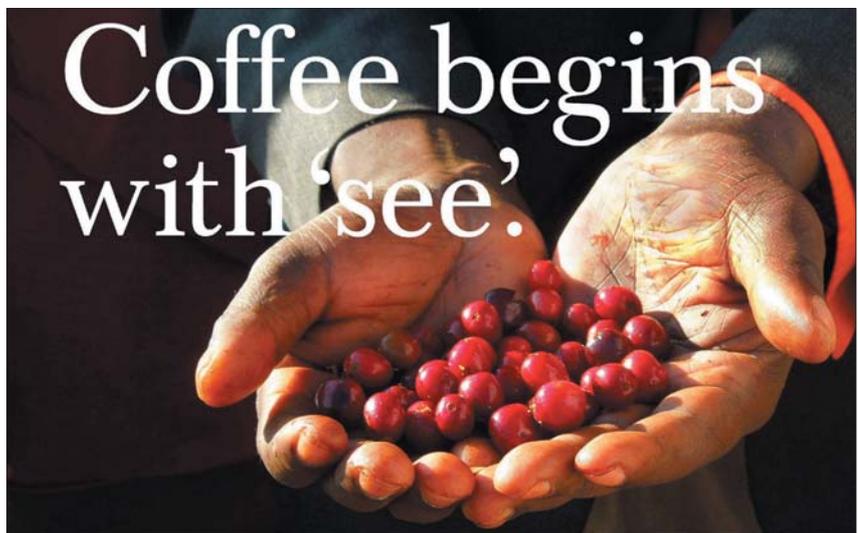
Meanwhile, Barry Mortlock is to offer his web domain name coffeeculture.co.uk by auction. It is on offer for around £2500 - apply to 07725 237667.

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The Kaffee Campus show will be held in Berlin on 17-19 September. It is run by the German Roasters Guild and features seminars, workshops and lectures, tastings, roasting, and the German barista championship.

The coffee shop Cappuccino and Company in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, has highlighted an interesting trading problem. Because of credit card fees, it levied a \$15 minimum charge for card payment; for a lower transaction, they would take fifteen dollars but give a credit note for the balance, with which customers were happy. However, the owner claims to have now been told by one credit card operator that it will 'fine' retailers who adopt a minimum-charge policy, up to ten thousand dollars - it turns out that a couple of major card companies in America do indeed disapprove of retailers setting a minimum amount. The cafe has now stopped taking card payments completely.

A petition has been launched to have the cafe at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, originally named in honour of Jimmy Savile, rechristened 'Poppas' in honour of Sir Ludwig Guttmann, spiritual father of the Paralympics. Since all references to Savile were removed from the hospital, the cafe has been using the name Cafe@WRVS.

The Bewitched coffee shop, which has sites in Kettering and Wellingborough, is to open a third site in Corby. The shop achieved significant publicity last year by deliberately opening next door to a Costa. The company has said: "we are not here

to offer an alternative to the big brands - we are here to offer something better."

Simon Burn of the Wild Heart music shop in Bourne, Stamford, is proposing to extend as a linked coffee shop in the next-door premises. The local paper reports that the cafe will feature 'ukeleses on the tables for customers to play on'.

One of several curious research documents released recently is the Cafes & Coffee Shops report by Plimsoll, which says there is 'a widening gap' between coffee businesses making outstanding profits and those losing money. The report says that average profit margins have fallen to 1.1 per cent of sales and that 208 of the UK's top 509 coffee shop companies are now making a loss - but that 104 such businesses are making 'record profits' with average profit margins of 10.6 per cent. Although this magazine has asked how the researchers assessed the 'top 509', and what constitutes 'record profits', no answer has been received.

The Roasterb company of Windsor, says that being nominated as one of the weekly picks by Dragons' Den personality Theo Paphitis has had a perceptible benefit - the roaster says that he has achieved 200 more Twitter followers as a direct result of his endorsement.

Pipers Crisps has won its second national award of the year - its new pack took a silver in the DBA Design Effectiveness Awards.

The hitch-hiker's galactic blend

The Has Bean roastery of Stafford was right up with the times last month, bringing out its Don't Panic blend in time for World Towel Day.

This will strike a chord with fans of *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, who will know (and many of whom will quote word-for-word) the author's maxim that a towel is the single most useful item to carry around the universe, and that 'any man who can hitch the length and breadth of the galaxy, and still knows where his towel is, is clearly a man to be reckoned with'.

World Towel Day is a real annual occasion for fans, and Has Bean's Steve Leighton tells us that the blend is one in a range of 12 monthly 'guest coffees' for this year.

"These are the blends most roasters would be scared to share," Steve told us. "The Don't Panic is two coffees you wouldn't normally blend, a decaf and a catimor... but rules are meant to be broken, and I think it works. Expect big sticky mouthfeel, with a cherrydrop note, and with a milk chocolate sweetness that just makes this a gloopy-fest."



The Has Bean label and towel

Customers also received a small Has Bean towel. The recipe notes include one totally spurious 42 per cent content - we hesitate to report it to anyone who is not a *Guide* fan, but '42' was supposedly the answer to the ultimate question of life, the universe, and everything...

We also hesitate to report that the June blend is Yo-Yo, Here We Go, in honour of National Yo-Yo day, which celebrates the birthday of the man who took the yo-yo to commercial success. Each customer ordering it will also receive a Has Bean yo-yo!

Cafe makes hay with latte art

The Caracoli coffee shop and deli of Aylesford, Guildford and Winchester has given an interesting practical lesson on how to make promotional use of latte art, after its head barista, Dhan Tamang, won the UK Latte Art Championships. The Nepalese barista goes to represent the UK in the world event in Nice at the end of this month.

The most entertaining aspect of the latte art contest is that each entrant has to submit a picture of the design they intend to create - this overcomes the possibility of a sheer fluke, in which a barista creates a wonderful design by a lucky pour which they may never be able to repeat.



Coffee contest winners rarely receive any attention by the general public (unlike the tea sector, the coffee trade has no mechanism for promotion of the industry) but by putting some effort in, Caracoli has achieved a quite astonishing amount of local media coverage in the areas where it operates... and then has capitalised further on the win by promoting its barista 'on tour' around its branches doing latte art demonstrations.

There is reportedly an interesting contradiction of attitudes in Whitstable - what used to be the Rendez-Vous coffee shop is now called Whitstable Coffee Company to celebrate its links with the town and present a rather more modern-day cafe culture image. According to the local press, Richard and Kate Neame say they have always focused on Whitstable, buying from other local traders and putting money into the town. "National brands are a serious threat, and we passionately support an independent High Street."

In contrast, there are reported to be protests in the same town against the arrival of Harris and Hoole in a former Clintons shop. The cafe's Nick Tolley said he believed that customers are 'crying out for better coffee', but protesters wore Tesco bags on their heads, in reference to the chain's co-owner.

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The newsfeed is boughtonscoffeehouse.wordpress.com



The cup with no handles and with very discreet branding, and (right) the inner angle of the wall



Lavazza, which has always worked hard on 'design' in the Italian sense of the word, has created an extremely unusual espresso cup, intended to allow the liquor to fall into the cup in precisely the right way to avoid disturbing the crema.

The e-cup features no handle, just two slight hollows in the wall providing a grip for the fingers, and a very unusual inner shape, in which the walls slope at different angles. This is intended to 'allow the coffee to fall gently and fluidly from the espresso machine's spout to the bottom of the cup... the e-cup then collects the espresso gently, just like two hands joined to protect the content... no breaking up of the crema, just the ultimate expression of aroma and flavour'.

It was Lavazza which invented the espresso spoon, which has a gap in the bowl which allows for sugar to be stirred without disturbing the crema.

A further development is intended to be one that nobody notices - the extremely discreet white-on-white branding on the side of the cup has been improved, so that it now remains absolutely pristine after a lot of washing. It is sufficiently discreet that the Wimbledon authorities, who told Lavazza that they were horrified at the idea of cups branded by the competition's sponsors, were served coffee in the white-on-white cups... and didn't notice the branding.

Elsewhere, an extremely bizarre kind of coffee cup is the Creature Cup, designed by Yumi Yumi of America and available here at around £20. The interior base of the cup features a 3D ceramic model of a monkey, an octopus, or similar unexpected creature.



Lincoln's hope and glory...

The Lincoln and York roastery in Lincolnshire, which as a private-label contract roaster generally acts as an anonymous support service for the trade, has made the unusual move of creating a brand for itself - it has set up the Hope and Glory Coffee Company, which brings together a new set of coffee pods with a specific machine.

The target is the single-serve consumer market, which has been reported over the past year or more to be the next big thing in speciality coffee, allowing for relatively easy brewing of high-quality drinks in the home or in offices.

The sector is reported to be growing at the rate of 28 per cent per year.

The Hope and Glory operation matches ESE coffee pods produced in the roastery with a machine by Cogeco of Italy, which is described as being a robust machine for regular use yet stylish enough for kitchen or office.

The coffee machines are priced at £349, and the pods are sold in packs of 25 at £6.25.



This is a new piece of work intended to be the most stylish at-home coffee grinder - it is the HG One, and is, we believe, still only available in the USA, on pre-order. Only \$895.



A carry-pack for takeaway coffee and snacks which has appeared on the TV programme *Dragon's Den* is now available to the trade - the main features of it are that it holds food and drink in one container, and that it can be overprinted. The inventor is Luke Booth, and the most novel aspect of the product is the integral paper bag inside a flat-pack cardboard outer, which is thought to be a 'first'. "We are now getting daily enquiries from coffee houses," he tells us.

One of the world chocolate trade's top characters has died - Mott Green, who single-handedly revived the high-class product from Grenada, was electrocuted there while working on a solar cooling system.

Café Impressions of Hinckley has won praise from the local mayor for decorating its walls in rainbow colours and other projects to celebrate the World Day Against Homophobia - among the features were trees made out of negative newspaper headlines about the gay community, painted in different colours which reflected the colours of the rainbow flag and with leaves with positive messages on. The mayor said that the project was well thought out, and that it should make people more tolerant.

The Paper Cup Company has introduced a new cup made from Kraftpak, which is made from natural, renewable and traceable fibres (kraft is a paper-trade processing term, producing a paper or paperboard, which is usually noticeably strong... typically, heavy-duty envelopes). The company's Paul Woodward says the move is in response to "a huge demand for a kraft-style paper cup, with a smooth wall that would give good branding opportunities, while being a food-grade material."

A report from the USA includes the interesting comment that 60 per cent of all new Starbucks sites there in the next five years will be drive-throughs.

Caffè Nero, described as 'the largest independent coffee house group in Europe', has been the subject of an intriguing report which suggests that its latest development plans involve opening a new store approximately every four days somewhere in the world. The remark was made at the opening of a new partnership in Cyprus - Caffè Nero helpfully clarified it by telling us: "on average Caffè Nero aims to open approximately 50 stores in the UK each year, and has a planned international roll-out of 30-40 stores next year".

The Horsham Coffee Roaster company has moved into larger premises - Bradley and Amelia Steenkamp launched the business from their garage last year, and have now opened up in the Church Lane estate, Plummers Plain. The couple have said that while roasting at home was a lovely experience, it meant they could never escape the aroma, and neighbours became concerned about smoke appearing from their garage!

The new Blackpool Tower Coffee Company has opened up on level five of the world-famous tower. We are told that customers can faintly hear the organ from the ballroom while experiencing the view across the piers and sea.

A curiously unfortunate experience was suffered by the owner of the Espresso lounge in Tring - someone stole the number plates from his car,

and fitted them to another vehicle, which they then used for a drive-off at a petrol station.

The Bath artist Perry Harris is showcasing more than 350 pieces of his work at an exhibition at the town's Society Café until June 28. Café owners Adrian and Jane Campbell-Howard encourage local artists...



...meanwhile, cafes in Bridlington have been serving 'cappuffincinos' to celebrate the return of the birds to nearby cliffs, after a disastrous start to the breeding season because of adverse weather. The drinks feature a chocolate sprinkle through a puffin-shaped stencil designed by a local artist.

Cafédirect has turned its 30-second promotional video 'Made the Small Way' into an advertisement to be shown in independent cinema chains across the UK. The campaign will run for three months.

The trend for coffee shops to crop up in 'other kinds of business' as joint ventures has taken a rather unexpected turn - Tea Monkey, the well-regarded tea-house concept, has opened up inside a branch of Mothercare in Leeds. The tea-room founder Tracey Bovingdon has said that Tea Monkey has the ability to provide accessible and appealing facilities for families - typically, the brand's use of free-to-use iPads, mounted on the wall in every store, will offer games to keep children entertained. Notably, she has said: "I hope that this partnership with Mothercare will be the first of many in the retail sector."

More old civic park buildings are being turned into coffee houses - the council in Alfreton has approved a move by the Chatterbox Café to convert local park toilets into a catering business. However, in Southend, it is reported that there has been 'fury' at the news that an empty café block in some recently refurbished gardens has so far cost the taxpayer £623,875. A councillor who had asked for details of the expenditure reportedly said: "I'm so angry I could cry. The damned kiosk has barely been open in its two year existence - it is profligate insanity to waste it on a facility that has a 'closed' sign on it for the majority of its miserable existence." Another disused park building is the subject of a coffee house application - this is the former lodge in Kimberley park, Falmouth.

Every flavour maker will encourage café operators to experiment and to test out recipes for new drinks using flavours... but is this practical? Do café operators really have either the time or the resources to spend on devising new drinks? Many say not at all - but curiously, the Sweetbird brand (from Beyond the Bean) now has evidence of operators doing just that.

"Everybody loved the menu of unusual drinks that we demonstrated at Caffe Culture," reports the brand's Joanne Fairweather. "A lot of them took pictures of the menu and the drinks, and I do think many went back to their own businesses to try them for themselves. We already know of one customer who tasted the Eton Mess frappe at the show, and is now serving it with cream and crushed meringue."

(That features Sweetbird strawberry smoothie, Zuma yogurt frappe, milk, crushed meringue and ice. The frappe, ice and milk are blended, and poured on to the smoothie mix. The business using it is Hush in Plymouth, where Christina Tozer has priced it at £2.80 as an introductory price, although she has remarked that she thinks she can certainly pitch it higher.)

"What coffee house operators lack, and this is only because of time and nothing else, is the freedom to experiment - it's quite understandable that it takes a lot of time just thinking about what goes with what, and that's why we come up with many ideas that are worth trying out.

Making flavour work

Do a supplier's recipe ideas actually work on the street? They do, says Beyond the Bean – even the promotional ideas from their Caffe Culture show stand have already gone on sale



"An example - what do we do with hazelnut? Apart from going in coffee, it also goes well with chocolate, and that instantly starts you thinking of both hot drinks and cold ones.

"And cherry - a dark cherry mocha is one to bring out every winter. Cherry also works in a berry smoothie, or you can mix flavours for a very-berry smoothie, for a deeper dimension. I have used a diluted cherry syrup to make ice cubes - it flavours a lemonade, or even a coke, and as the ice

melts into the drink, it keeps adding flavour.

"We do have some customers who hold in-house competitions, and the winner's drink goes on the menu. We got involved with the Youth Hostel Association, who had two sites going head to head in creating a signature iced drink, which was judged on appearance, taste and commercial viability.

"The Strawberry Fields Forever, created by the St Pancras hostel, won, and went on sale at both sites. It was strawberry, with yogurt, and whipped cream."

Sweetbird is also extremely keen on the idea of using iced tea syrups as the

basis for imaginative menu items, and adds that bagged flavoured teas work equally well (though need a bit more preparation time.)

"Long and thirst-quenching iced teas are just the ticket bringing a refreshing and grown-up element to a summer menu. You can either make them by brewing bagged or loose leaf teas short and strong, then leaving to cool before topping up with water or lemonade, ice and a garnish, or use a syrup.

"Cosy Tea organic blueberry and echinacea tea makes a deliciously fruity, sherberty tea base in a deep jewel red, which you top up with lemonade, ice and a slice of lemon. For a Sweetbird iced tea syrup, such as the raspberry, passionfruit/lemon or jasmine/lime, use three pumps of syrup topped up with still or sparkling



The Eton Mess, now on sale at Hush

water and ice - it's quick, tasty, and economical to make, and it's easy to promote daily or weekly specials, or even make some up for sampling."

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Regency launches full-flavour Toschi

The new syrup being offered by Regency of Manchester is Toschi, (pronounced 'toski') which comes from a family-owned business near Modena - their original idea was for preserving cherries and hazelnuts, which both grow there, and then they moved into other fruits.

"The idea of 'quality' for them is a high fruit content," remarks Philip Rundlett of Regency. "The proof is in the tasting - you can see that the strawberry is actually made with real fruit, not a flavouring, because you can see the pulp! An indication of the fruit content is that this uses a 5ml pump - others on the market might use two squirts of seven or ten, and two use 15ml.



Philip Rundlett

"To taste for yourself, taste in milk, which is a very neutral carrier. Do not just test by smell - you must taste it in whatever it is you propose to use it in, because what might suit the coffee used in the café down the road may not suit the coffee you're using. You will not get the truth until you make a like-for-like comparison, which is why we are investing in sample bottles.

"With regard to price, I think of Toschi coming in slightly lower than three very big brands... but in quality, I'd then turn all that round and put this a horse's head in front of the others."

To try something new and unique is vital, says Regency.

"Anyone who wants to maintain a degree of customer loyalty now has to look at creating variety. This does not mean creating an enormous menu, just an imaginative one - this industry doesn't sit still, and you won't get loyalty without innovation.

"We think Toschi has its place in the British summer, so we've been experimenting with strawberries and cream on the granita machine."



Britvic moves in to flavours

Two unexpected names cropped up together at this year's Caffe Culture show – the Teisseire flavour appeared on a stand run by Britvic, announcing a new partnership.

Teisseire has been in the UK before, but this time it has the backing of a very big distribution company, noted the company's Russell Kirkham, and Britvic has been seriously working to understand something new from its existing businesses.

"We've only just launched this, but we see that the trend for more imaginative flavoured drinks is not the fad we thought it was - this is no longer about six flavours for lattes!" Usefully, he adds, Teisseire actually has two flavour profiles - one for coffee, and one for soft drinks or the bar markets. "The two sectors have different complexities of palate."

Representing the front line sector on the stand was barista Alex Redgrave, the 'coffee vagabond' of Gyre and Gimble, Buckingham (below).



"I'm personally not a fan of syrupy coffee, but using syrups can add twists to certain products, and there is a definite demand from customers.

"As a barista, I want a syrup with flavour, not just sugar. The ideal syrup in my mind is one that is purely flavour with as little overt sweetness and sugar taste as possible. By nature of being made from sugar, this isn't really possible, but a stronger flavour-sugar ratio means less sugar in the first place.

"As far as sampling competing syrups in the situation you present, I would most likely try to assess them side-by-side blind in a fairly neutral coffee, most likely in a flat white as this would be a fair representation of how I would expect the product to perform."

Shaking up the flavour sector

We have made it fairly clear in recent issues that we think the Da Vinci brand's recent burst of activity in promotions and recipe ideas is a long-overdue piece of re-assertion work by a sleeping giant of the flavouring sector - and at the Caffe Culture show, the brand rather admirably agreed with us, but added that they have also managed to shake up the concept of 'creativity' in the entire sector as a result.

"This has created interest," confirms Will Richards, who leads Da Vinci's work in the coffee-house sector. "We've had the reaction 'we're glad Da Vinci is back on track', but what is more important is that so many people are glad that we are actually championing creativity.

"One thing our activity has achieved is that more people are realising how things can be done with combinations of syrups and sauces and so on. How one Da Vinci product works with another Da Vinci product is the next big step."

A star performer in this has been the well-known barista trainer Paul Meikle-Janney, who has been creating demonstration recipes. Does all this work relate directly to the high street?

"The key to the whole thing is everyday staff being able to make the stuff," responds Will Richards. "There are a lot of tastes to be catered for out there, and this market is always moving - what we are trying to do is produce ideas which are relevant to what the market wants, not just clever recipes we've invented to show how great we are.

"If we say to the café operator: 'here is a good smoothie idea, it will get attention and sell, you can make it in two minutes, and you get no wastage', then it should become pretty clear that we really are being helpful!

"Yes, we have had operators take on the recipes, and they have said: 'this is what we want!' But perhaps, so far, just not enough of them..."

At Caffe Culture, Paul and the Da Vinci team were having some quite varied fun combining products. One was a strawberry and cream smoothie (a combination which was noticed elsewhere at the show).

"The base of the drink was a vanilla mix, which basically is like a light vanilla crème anglaise," explains Paul. "Mixed with a strawberry smoothie and blended with ice, it gives you the strawberry and cream combination."

For combining products, he added, there are some very unusual, but easy, tricks which will get attention.

"My favourite ingredient at the moment is the chai syrup.

"But the word 'chai' loses a few people - chai works differently in different demographics in the UK." (What he is being too polite to say is that 'chai' may come across as being too posh for certain trading areas!)

"So what we do is a mulled mocha



Will Richards

with some chai in there. If you don't actually say it's chai, you avoid the problem of a whole set of people who don't know what chai is... and a lot of people are still not aware of it."

(The mulled mocha is made with Da Vinci chocolate sauce, their chai syrup, espresso and milk).

Creativity, remarks the Da Vinci team, is an essential part of keeping the customer interested, and retaining the image of the coffee shop as an important high street venue.

"It is the same as happened with butchers and fish-and-chip shops," comments Will Richards. "It is the creative ones who have survived."

Being imaginative with flavours does not mean going to a lot of effort, says John Taylerson at Malmesbury Syrups. It's a question of choosing the right syrup which allows a quickly-made menu item.

"A key one is our mulling syrup - and it is not just for winter. It converts an apple juice, cider, wine or frankly anything, including a fruit smoothie, into a spiced version. It's a prize-winner and it's a great way to customise, easily. It sold out last year, with John Lewis running out, ordering more, and eventually completely cleaning us out."

Ginger is another useful flavour, says Taylerson - but it has to be the right one. "Green tea and a shot of ginger makes a quite addictive drink. But it does need the right ginger.. you can't shove gingerbread in instead, because that's a different thing.

"Our ginger also works as a cordial and is great with sparkling water. It makes a ginger-beer type of drink."

For an indication of how some caterers have used syrups effectively, says Taylerson, look at one mobile catering idea for summer county shows.

"We shift hundreds of litres of our mint chocolate flavour and it grows year on year - we have already doubled our normal amount this spring.

"Go to a county show this year and chances are, you will find this served by one of our customers - our mint chocolate with ice-cream. It makes a serious summer drink with real flavour."

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- 1/4 cup Classic White Frappé
- 1/2oz Toschi Raspberry

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At the end of this month, Liverpool will host Accelerate 2013, which is a festival think-tank and conference concentrating on business growth – it is so high-profile that the main speaker is the founder of Wikipedia, backed up by the Prime Minister's adviser on enterprise, and a collection of high-powered and dynamic business leaders. The event will also celebrate the announcement of the Accelerate 250 list, which is a collection of the companies whose attitude and performance is reckoned to be the kind of inspiration and activity which is expected to lead Britain back to prosperity.

These 'ones to watch' are already being titled 'the vital six per cent' of British business, who are showing the rest of us how it should be done.

And one is a coffee company. Not only that, it is a coffee brand whose image over the past few years has been the exact opposite of dynamic high-profile growth. Until very recently the image of Paddy and Scott's, as portrayed on their coffee packs, has been the very cosy one of two mates roasting coffee, almost for fun, with the slogan 'slow-roasted, packaged with love, drunk by you!'

Which in turn is exactly how this Suffolk operation started... however, after six years in business, they now supply not only a vast number of farm shops and delis, but also Waitrose, John Lewis and House of Fraser, several prominent contract caterers, and were selected to be the face of B&Q's re-born coffee-bar business. And they export to Hong Kong, Jamaica and the States.

They were nominated for Lord Young's list by, no less, Coutts, the bank of the very rich and famous.

And for Paddy Bishopp and Scott Russell, their appearance in that list rather drives a hole through their very-carefully cultivated strategy of staying well below the radar of the general beverage trades.

"We got the call out of the blue," says Scott. "The 'vital six per cent' are the companies that should be watched to drive the UK out of recession. When Lord Young puts you forward for this, you do a jig round the office!"

"We got nominated because Paddy lectures on entrepreneurship, and I work with the Princes Trust, so we are probably known for our speaking on business."

One of the brand's best-known facets has gone. The packaging no longer features the faces of the partners.

"Our faces are not on the packaging any more," confirms Paddy. "We are still slightly maverick, and we do still have a lot of fun, and we still use the slogan of 'slow roasted coffee'. The story of the two guys was a great story for its time, but it just isn't about two of us any more, it's about a brand."

And that is a significant statement, because Paddy and Scott's is now a very tightly-managed brand indeed.

"My background is in running businesses," explains Scott. "Paddy is the foodie. Between us, this company was done on firm foundations, not on the back of a cigarette packet."

But the small-time image of the company's first years is perfectly true.

"I had set up a café-deli in East Anglia," recalls Paddy, "and I was approached by a South African guy who slow-roasted two kilos of coffee at a time. I drank his coffee and thought 'this is great!' and I wanted to use it, although he had never supplied a café before. Then, in our first year, we won 'best café in Suffolk', and our coffee was highlighted in that."

"Later on, after we were getting established, he said he was moving away, and I thought 'what about my coffee? You've got to teach me how to do this!' and so I went through a very steep learning curve on roasting."

"At that time, Scott used to drink in my café because he loved that coffee. So we bought the old two-kilo gas roaster, Old Smokey, from the South African and moved it into Scott's garage, with the idea of supplying local farm shops. Then we started getting calls from golf clubs and hotels – 'my wife loves your coffee, do you supply clients like us?' We'd look at each other and say: 'fire up the roaster!'"

Of all the coffee roasters currently supplying the coffee trade, there are a few who started life behind a café counter, and indeed there are now several who still combine the life of café and roastery. But some roasters, and indeed many coffee salesmen, have never served at the sharp end... so how much does experience behind the counter help in appreciating what the trade customer really needs, and what the ultimate consumer actually wants?

"This is a question we ask ourselves all the time," responds Paddy readily. "We are a proud British company, and something my café taught me was 'know who your coffee drinker is, and what they enjoy'. So, very early on, we decided 'we will roast for the British palate'."

"Roasting is not hard – it's getting it right every time which is the problem. We decided very quickly that the essence of success was in slow roast, and that we wouldn't burn it, but we would take away the bitterness and go for the smoothness. That's what the old roaster told me, and that's what we've done in all our blends."

"We now do a lot of tastings for workplace coffee service, and 82.5 per cent in a survey said our coffee was best. We do this because we don't go in offering thirty blends – we offer one choice, and we do that by looking at the palate."

"When we started, we did ask things like: 'what coffee do you like? Kenyan?' Of course, all our customers said they didn't know. But we did see that customers are more likely to be drinking lattes, not espressos, and we simply created coffees that people under-

Flying below trade radar



Paddy (left) and Scott in the Bean Barn

stand, and that consumers want to drink.

"Now, we have won several cupping sessions against companies who have made and served very careful espressos – but we made lattes, and the clients loved them. We have had a lot of success against Starbucks and Costa in corporate in-house coffee."

that in turn has led to the creation of their quality 'app', for auditing the continuing performance of multi-site clients.

"We do protect our brand and we now have training schools in the head offices of contract caterers and corporate clients, because it's clear that they now want to do coffee properly," say

“ We can now rate a client's coffee within seconds, using an i-phone. We have de-skilled the audit element – there is now no danger of simply scoring a pretty barista high! ”

These are places which go through hundreds of thousands of cups a year, and contract catering has been our fastest growth sector so far."

It has certainly been a preferable route to going for big retail business.

"Yes, we are well known in 400 farm shops and delis, but supplying supermarkets is a hard stage to decide – do you go to one which will take over your business, or do you stick to your roots? We have spoken to some supermarkets and thought 'this is not for us', but we are on a regional programme with one, which puts us in 48 regional stores, and that's manageable. It's too easy to get frazzled with supermarkets – they expect so much."

"Anyway, we decided very early that trying to cover every single base just wouldn't work."

The contract catering business has produced some interesting developments. One is that Paddy and Scott's have become even more protective of their brand – a caterer only gets the coffee by committing to training, and

the partners. "We supply several big catering chains – but nobody knows it! – and the thing we see is that they want to improve their offering. We have learned that coffee becomes the driver for many catering companies... the contract caterers who take good care of their coffee are certainly seeing an uplift."

The quality-control 'app' is designed to allow account managers to carry out 55-point quality control checks, using a combination of integrated photography and a 'scoring' software. A very simplistic description of it is that anything from dirty steam wands to unacceptable shot times or incorrect machine settings are recorded and analysed – any outlet which consistently falls below expectations receives close attention.

"We can now rate a client's coffee within seconds, using an i-phone," confirms Paddy. "We have de-skilled the audit element – there is now no danger of simply scoring a pretty barista high!"

"In the hotel trade, where staff turnover is enormous, we can now show when and why the coffee is bad. We are showing them – score less than this, and you've got a problem.

"This has gone down hugely well with the corporate clients, because the people signing the cheques are a long way away from the coffee. This 'app' ties in with their customer relationship management systems, and it's leagues ahead of anyone else."

It is not just an option for corporate clients – it is virtually a requirement.

"Training has to be a part of a partnership with us. If they don't buy into the training, they don't get the brand.

"The big battle is in getting them to pay for it, but they are beginning to do so. When someone starts whingeing about what it costs to get our support, we know they'll be a client who'll have problems, but we have made it clear to clients what they have to pay for...training does involve a cost, and they have to realise that.

"Training is done here, and sending staff to Suffolk is a cost. We have turned down two big contract caterers because they wouldn't buy into this. But we do now even have hotels in Yorkshire sending their staff down to Suffolk for our training. When they pay for it, they value it.

"You will also probably never ever have seen a more detailed training manual than ours.

This came from one big question – how do we stop clients phoning here with problems? The answer was, give them something which gives all the facts – if the grinder isn't working properly, then there can be a number of reasons... but what are they? And how many suppliers give instructions for cleaning different types of machine?

"It's a training bible, and a log book, which relates to our scoring system. It is beautifully written, and it has humour – we have seen people reading this training manual just for the enjoyment of it! It actually is fun to read!

"There is also an action list at the end – don't complete that, and you can't order any more coffee. Our brand is that important to us."

The most recent big name to have bought into this approach is B&Q, who now have one superstore with an in-house coffee bar branded for Paddy and Scott's, not for B&Q.

"We've been asked for this a million times, but have never wanted to do it. This time, we got a call from B&Q, and again we thought: 'do we want to?'"

"We decided to try, we were up against Starbucks, and two days later we were told 'you've got three months to build a café for us'.

"It's in what was their old greenhouse section, and it has our name on because, reasonably, B&Q did not

want their name on it because they knew perfectly well they did not have a reputation for coffee. They did have an instore café before... but nobody remembers it!

"Now, the coffee shop is packed, and B&Q are working out what it now means for them that people are staying up to 70 minutes longer in the store than they did before."

Quite typically, the partners laid down some 'brand guideline' rules. One, bizarrely, was 'no jacket potatoes'. "Of course," retorts Paddy. "We are not a cafeteria!"

The fast growth of Paddy and Scott's has had its uncomfortable moments.

At one stage, progress became such that Old Smokey was certainly not going to handle it any more, and indeed nor was any other equipment in the company HQ, the Bean Barn.

The radical answer, not predicted by the two chums whose pictures were still appearing on their coffee packs, was to consider outsourcing the roasting work... and the job has now gone to a roaster who is well respected, and shares the same preference for a low profile. Indeed, all we can say is that Paddy and Scott's coffee is now roasted a very long way north of Suffolk.

"We decided to outsource when we realised we would need a million-pound investment to progress.

"Up to then, we had been just quietly getting on with it, and we were so far below the general trade radar that we hadn't had a lot of roasters pitching for our business.

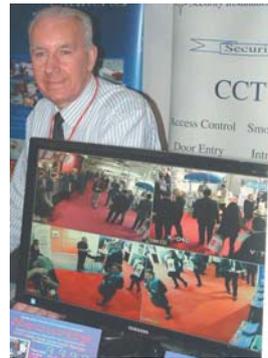
"But then there was a panic – we had a Waitrose account, and we couldn't do it by ourselves.

"One roaster came straight down to see us and said: 'OK – let's see the beans you're working with', which was the right attitude. He now roasts to our profiles, and has even invested in equipment just to service us. He brings great expertise."

With the company still progressing fast, one thing which has not changed is the Paddy and Scott sense of humour. Typically, they sent one member of staff to India on a coffee-origin trip and gave him five map grid references... with the rule that he couldn't get a taxi anywhere! There is also an awful continuing humour in the loyalty cards, which say: 'the tenth coffee is Scott-free... just don't tell Paddy!'

The most recent example of this comes with their sponsorship of the Metaltek-Scotts cycle racing team. This was announced with a straight-faced statement from Paddy which actually did appear in one newspaper:

"Scott and I are both keen cyclists and it has now been proved that the best pit-stop food available is a glass of water, a double espresso, and a dark chocolate brownie..."



A practical, if slightly unusual, exhibitor at the Caffe Culture show was Kensington Cameras, showing the practicality of instore CCTV for coffee-houses.

"I see a lot of stuff stolen, and so do café owners," said the exhibitor. "They now like the newest facility, to check what's going on even through their phones." Asked if staff object to being filmed, the company said: "for staff, this is now all part of the job – if you don't like the cameras, don't take the job. But more important, staff feel reassured by having the cameras there. Anyone causes trouble in the café, you now have a record."

Elsewhere at this year's show, we discovered that the Pago fruit juice brand is now being distributed by SHS, the same people as Bottlegreen soft drinks. Pago's Marvin Henshaw has stayed with the product, and told us: "There is no clash – Bottlegreen's big emphasis is on cordials and sparkling presses, in which they compete with people like Belvoir, we're a juice and nectar brand, and we compete with brands like Frobisher." The Pago brand is 125 this year.



Readers may remember that we were very keen on a product shown by Lotus at a previous show, about which very little was subsequently said – this was the 'crumb' version of their speculoos (although the pack describes it more respectfully as 'crushed caramelised biscuit!') We had suggested to them that a very good use would be for the base of a cheesecake, so we're now intrigued to find that the 'crumbs' are now available in packs, and that the Gu brand of puddings and cheesecakes has been experimenting with them. Lotus has also been working on the idea of retail packs of the product – which goes to prove that even though you may have what appears to be a long-established commodity product, you can always come up with some new ideas.

Among other bakery curiosities at this year's show was the move by Honeyrose, developing new smaller sizes on certain cookie products: 27gm, to sell at 50p. The new size is a two-bite size, said the company, because some customers find a 75gm cookie too big.

Elsewhere...

Cool Beanz, run by Glenn Williamson, has opened in a ground floor unit below the Ipswich Borough Council offices in Grafton House. As we understand it, he runs a different business, but visits the borough building regularly, and complained that there was nowhere there to get a coffee – so he created one. The mayor opened the coffee house and said "I shall certainly use it."

A European litter project, in which coffee cups play a significant part, will begin next year – the first Clean Europe Week will be held across the EU in May 2014 and annually thereafter, with the backing of the European Commission. The event is supported by Pack2Go Europe, a food and beverage convenience and service packaging association whose president is Tony Waters of Solo, the Cambridge-based paper cup makers.

A research project has found that very few companies in the hospitality industry have defibrillators onsite, that two-thirds of hospitality trade employees do not know how to use one, and that sixteen per cent of catering staff do not know what one is. Worryingly, 69 per cent of caterers said they are worried about using one to treat a heart casualty, for fear of being held liable if the patient did not survive. One third of hotel, pub and restaurant employees said they would not use a defibrillator under any circumstances. The company behind the research has not replied to several requests for specific figures with regard to attitudes in the café trade.

Living Coasts, a zoo in Torquay, has created its own coffee brand. The Rainforest Village label uses coffee from the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro, blended with one from the Amazon rainforest.

Matteo Pavoni from the Bonapartes coffee shop at London's Charing Cross station is the new barista champion for the SSP contract catering group. In an unusual tactic, he invited the judges to choose whether they wanted a sweet or a bitter drink – for the bitter one he added a melted dark cacao to his espresso and for the sweetness he added crushed raspberry puree to the coffee.

The MP for Gosport has opened the Huhtamaki BioWare Garden at a local school. The garden features compost made from the company's compostable cups. Huhtamaki has said that it wanted to prove that it could 'close the loop' and that cups made in the UK could indeed be composted and put back to use in this country.

We have often questioned the product sources behind many of the new 'boutique' tea brands, some of whom find it convenient to suggest that they do all the product creation and blending by themselves... which, frankly, we do not believe. So it was particularly refreshing to come across Lawn Tea at the Caffe Culture show and hear about their new branded range.

This is a mobile tea-cart operation, which could be reasonably described as an upscale version of the average coffee cart. It tours venues and events around the country, and works on a 'quintessentially English' theme - it does not simply dispense takeaway drinks, but serves in a style almost as genteel as if it were in a traditional tea-room, with its hampers of cakes and traditional recipes.

It also produces a range of teas under its own Lawn Collection name. How did they do that?

"We wanted our own blend, so we created our own ideas for versions of five popular blends," they told us candidly. "Then we spoke to Alex at Blends for Friends, and he blended them for us."

Alex Probyn is a master blender, who spent many years with Tetley before going out on his own, expressing frustration at the restrictions of working for large-scale commercial tea. He began blending teas and infusions as family gifts, sourcing from the kind of small-scale farms that were closed to him while working for a giant brand - and now, six years later, he is the premier source of own-label blending for small brands. He has achieved some attention by having managed to export 'British' tea back to China, and his reputation is such that it is now even possible to give a session with him as one of those 'special day out' gifts!

This, we suspect, is the true source of many current 'boutique' tea brands.

"You are correct," he confirmed to us good-naturedly. "There are many niche and exciting tea brands out there for whom we have been the creative influence - we are using our knowledge of teas and herbs to bring their ideas to life. We also have the machinery in-house to make Fuso tea bags too so we're a one-stop-shop for top end brands."

"As you will know well, some people like to talk about their suppliers and others don't... but that's life!"

Alex rather generously says of new tea entrepreneurs that he just 'brings their ideas to life', but what kind of ideas do these newcomers have? Are they all interested in the tea, or simply in the marketing?

"There's a bit of poetic licence there," he concedes. "We do get a lot of new brands coming and saying: 'we've got a great idea, nobody's done anything like this before', and we think 'oh yes they have...!'"

"But we do get a lot of very quirky new ideas - we get them saying they



The Lawn Collection - one of the new tea brands created in partnership with Alex Probyn (below)

Blending for friends

want a tea that tastes like a Christmas cake, or someone says they run a café on a 1920s-style theme and they want a tea to suit.

"However, we can always turn it into an interactive thing. People may come to us and say 'can you supply us with...', but the deeper the client is involved, the better they're going to sell it. So they all come to us to sit down and talk through their business plans, and even if they started off by just wanting their hand held, they all end up being interactively involved."

In the case of Lawn Tea, says Alex, their reference to having 'created their own versions of five popular blends' turns out to be accurate. The Lawn Collection's Earl Grey (Sri Lankan Uva, rose petals, cornflowers, and bergamot) and the Green and Pleasant (Chinese green tea, peppermint and aniseed) were born from the client's original ideas.

"They said that as a business, they wanted a quintessentially English brand. They have a terrific mobile business which is very cleverly designed and looks the full part, and they said



'we want something British'.

"The idea of the Rhubarb Patch tea came from them, and we do keep rhubarb pieces in stock, so we could do it. The Sanderson Hotel does our rhubarb and custard tea - rhubarb really is one of my favourite ingredients."

The Lawn's Rhubarb Patch is a combination of rooibos, rhubarb, ginger and lime. (And the rhubarb and custard blend was one of the Probyn blends sold to the Chinese!)

Whoever comes up with the idea, is the consumer really keen on such new flavours? Yes, they are, says Alex Probyn - and although it may not be widely recognised, the big tea brands have seen this just as clearly as the new boutique brands.

"The consumer really is inclined to

say 'let's give it a go'. The customer either says: 'I'll try that quirky one next time I come in', or they'll finish the English Breakfast they came in for, and walk out with a pack of the quirky one. For some of the brands we supply, the traditional English Breakfast and Earl Grey has become a very small part of what they're doing - at one point you would have expected these to make up 70 per cent of their business, and for them it is now less than 20 per cent.

"The big brands are really worried about this, because while their 'standard' tea market is still vast, it is declining... however, the overall tea market is not declining, and that is because consumers are buying new things.

"There are examples of the red-brick brands saying 'we know we have to change', and some of them are certainly trying to do things... but not necessarily under their own names, because they know this is not what they are known for.

"So, there are really good examples of them doing creative things under other identities... in which respect, the industry has a lot to thank them for."

The emphasis on giving every client something which really can be called 'unique' to them, with a client list which includes individuals and multi-nationals, over a hundred tea-rooms and hotels using their own unique blends, and some business supplying other tea companies, has now resulted in an extremely lengthy list of Blends for Friends recipes.

"To put this in perspective - when I was at Tetley, I was tasting and blending all the time, and I physically created four blends which went to market. Since we started Blends for Friends, we have created over 17,000 blends, all of which are unique.

"But with a base ingredient list of 500 items, we have a lot to work with."

The business which began with personal blends for single customers still has a certain amount of that business, sometimes on a surprisingly large scale. "We recently had an individual customer in the Middle East who took forty packs of tea with gold sprinkles...

English cream tea is on its way to the Chinese

Exports of British tea to China have recently been joined by another typically-English product - the Haywood and Padgett bakery of Yorkshire, the UK's largest manufacturer of scones, has exhibited scones in the far east, to 'explain to Chinese people about our culture of English afternoon tea'.

Their export trip followed research work with Chinese students in Britain - this showed, among other things, that cheese scones were expected to be unsuccessful in China, but that plain scones might be found acceptable as a breakfast dish.

Also in Yorkshire, a Sheffield University researcher claims to have found the science behind the perfect cream tea scone. It is a 2:1:1 weight ratio, by which a 70gm scone should feature 35gm of jam and 35gm of cream. In what may not be considered a ground-breaking finding, it was announced that the radius of the scone dictates the ideal thickness of spread. The ideal scone should be 2.8cm wide, and the jam and cream layers should reduce in width by 5mm per layer, to give a 'sandcastle effect'.

The question of jam first or cream first (the practice is different between Cornwall and Devon) is now ruled by the academics to have been settled - their relative densities mean that 'jam first' is the more secure choice.

A committee has been formed in Plymouth to create the world record cream-tea scone - the current record stands at an eight-foot wide scone holding containing 200 kilos of strawberry jam. A requirement is that the scone will be edible, so it can be served to members of the public. Over the other side of the world, a Melbourne company has created the world's biggest tea-bag, weighing 151 kilos. The Planet Organic company made it to publicise its charity work for cancer support - they say it will make around 100,000 cups, but only if they can find a cup big enough.



Canny Jack endorses a new northern tea brand

One of the most famous footballers to come from the north-east of England has appeared in support of a new 'regional' tea brand – Jack Charlton, star of the country's only team to win the World Cup, has become the public face of Northumberland Tea. With a rather neat tag line, he is quoted as calling it 'the best cup since 1966'!

In reporting the new product, the company's local paper remarked that there has been no such thing as a 'local' Northumberland Tea. This reference intrigued us, as there have of course been several everyday black teas branded with London names and variations locally named in Liverpool and Manchester, there is of course Yorkshire Tea, Welsh Tea, and Irish Breakfast tea. And of course the UK's only commercial tea plantation is in Cornwall.

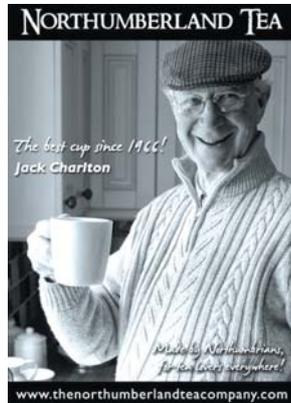
Is there any difference between other everyday black teas and a Northumberland blend?

The Northumberland one is created by local people Bill and Helen Logan (formerly of the Coffee Beans Café) with James Pogson, who tells us that the product features a distinct advantage over certain other 'everyday' teas.

The blend is largely Kenyan, with a secondary proportion of Assam, and a minor amount of Ceylon - these are the constituents of the classic English Breakfast blend. However, says James Pogson, the big difference with this tea is that the ingredients are those three teas, and nothing else.

"The blend we use is a classic blend that was used successfully by many tea companies since the advent of the tea bag in the early 1960s," he says. "With blending tea, the devil is in the detail - if you were to buy a few boxes of various brand leaders' tea, and tore open their tea bags, you would see that there is a proportion of off-grade 'reducers' that are in there to keep the costs of the tea down, so allowing the manufacturers to make a return while keeping margin-conscious trade customers happy.

"These teas are often from poorer African countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi. Vietnam,



Argentina and Brazil can also produce clean-liquoring teas that are cheap enough to bring the cost of a blend down without significantly altering the look of it in the cup, but the taste will be just noticeable.

"These types of reducers are used at up to thirty per cent by some of the well-known brands, particularly those who run lots of supermarket promotions, and that is why we make the claim that we do - Northumbrians appreciate quality and honesty, and we are committed to the non-use of reducers, thereby providing our customers with a better quality, more 'honest' blend of teas."

The personality who appears on the packs is one of the most recognisable English footballers, who is another local man, and a friend of the tea marketers. The product will also support a cause with another north-eastern footballing connection, the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation - a donation is made for every box of tea sold. The first box of Northumberland Tea to come off the production line was presented to Sir Bobby's widow, Lady Robson.



Drury has come up with a new display storage jar for its range of pyramid-bag teas. The jars are polycarbonate. "We had been looking for a way of storing and serving," says Drury. "We have boxes of a hundred which are designed for serving from, but not for display - and people do want to see the teas. We didn't want to go to glass, which has too many problems, but we have found this product in which you tap the lid, and the top seals. It's very useful - if someone says 'what's the rose and pomegranate like?', you now offer the jar and invite them to sniff. The designs match the designs of our labels."

There are new packs for Tregothnan, too - the UK's only home-grown tea has endorsed its nationality with the design of its re-useable keepsake kilner tins.



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It has taken some years, but suppliers are now suggesting that 2013 will be Britain's 'bubble tea summer'.

Bubble tea, or 'pearl tea' was created in Taiwan in the 1980s, and is a fruit or milky drink featuring small chewable tapioca balls which are sucked up through a straw; as with many 'tea' drinks, it may or may not actually contain a tea ingredient. The drink has involved much controversy over the years, partly through health concerns, and also because at the height of the craze in the far East, many people sank all they had into bubble-tea cafes, only to be left broke when the first enthusiasm had passed.

In Europe, the item has not caused so much fuss, except that the Bubbleology chain began in Soho in 2011 and now has a few branches, and the McDonalds business McCafe began selling the drink in Europe last year.

According to the trade wholesaler Cream Supplies, this is going to be the trade's 'bubble tea summer', and the supplier has taken on what will probably be the main two competing products, Bubble Froot and Wild Monk. Both have taken up the newer form of the drink, in which the pearls are not tapioca, but fruit-flavoured balls which burst on the tongue.

Bubble Froot, which popped up at both the London Coffee Festival and Caffe Culture, is the product from Drink Me Chai, the pioneer of powdered chai. This product uses the addition of ice and milk.

Will this be the summer of bubble?

Bubble tea has never really taken off in the UK. But a neat product variation may change that...

"We have a European manufacturer, this product was made to our specification, and is all-natural and 'free from'," we are told by the company's boss, Amanda Hamilton. "Most people get theirs from Taiwan, so it's worthwhile checking the ingredients."

The juice pearl, she thinks, will be preferred by British customers and by the trade.

"We have been thinking about the right practicality for a coffee-house - you usually have to buy a big tub of tapioca balls, you have to think of the fridge space they take up, you have to boil them, and then they have a short shelf life... and tapioca balls don't really taste of anything, just give a kind of weird chewy feeling."

"So we have a smaller pack, we offer ambient storage, and a shelf life of a month."

The strawberry and mango products are the first of a proposed range, with new ones coming, to be combined with fruit teas and smoothies.

"It's a product to have fun with - mix and match," says Amanda Hamilton. "We have starter kits to allow this - the



kit is probably £56.50, the cost per drink, including cup and straw, is 56p, and you retail at £2.50 or more for a 12oz."

Elsewhere, the Wild Monk product from Teaforia contains a non-dairy creamer and is prepared with ice and water, or hot water; stir the powder and add the pearls.

"Caffe Culture was the first show where we went up directly against Bubble Froot, and we are very happy with the reaction of those that tried both," the company's Diana

Novoa told us. "We have been in the speciality tea industry for three years, and Wild Monk was developed very closely with independent cafes, to cater to their specific needs - taste was considered very important.

"We were very fortunate to start distributing original bubble tea ingredients since 2010, before other companies started looking at it. Cafes and universities loved the idea and really wanted to serve the product, but very much disliked the bulky and costly machines and all the steps that were needed to make the drinks.

"The demand was there, but it was too complicated, set up cost was too high, and there were too many artificial ingredients. This is why we developed our product."

Is it a coincidence that Wild Monk and Bubblefoot have both come up with the 'burst in the mouth' juice pearls?

"We have been selling our Juice Pobbles in the UK and Europe since 2010. There is a big emphasis on ingredients - concentrated juice, artificial colours, and vegetarian friendly. There are different kinds of pearls, and we believe that the balance of the drink and the topping has to be right, and light.

"You can have fun with the Pobbles - they are amazing as ice cream and frozen yogurt toppings, or in cakes. The Wild Monk beverage powders also work as milkshakes, and as hot frothy drinks which work as alternatives to hot chocolate."

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Chai, just like mum used to make...

In India, one of the prime selling sites for the char-wallahs is the railway stations – which is probably why the new product from Allan Stilling at Hello Good Sip is called the Mumbai Railway Chai!

"This was developed in co-operation with people in India," he told us. "They drink it, look up at the ceiling, and say 'just like mum's!'"

This company, which works from both London and Copenhagen, has recently been experimenting with a range of ready-to-mix ground latte bases.

"We have to convert people from the idea of an American-style chai, which is all sweetness, to the European chai with no added sugar," remarks Stilling. "It all comes as a response to the trade, all kinds of catering trade, who see that there is a market for chai."

"The Scandinavian market is very mature in the American style of chai - in the UK, we are still getting started. Here, caterers know there is a market for it, but they look at the ingredients and say 'we don't like what's in the American chai'. They also know that it takes fifteen minutes to create a chai properly - that's why we get the popularity of a powder."

"It is a ground product, to be blended with milk, like a latte. There is nothing artificial in it at all. With ordinary milk you get a creamy result, with soy milk you get a dry taste. It dissolves very easily."

There are a couple of products which probably are not 'just like Mum's', in any culture.

"The Persian Liquorice Chai was made because liquorice is a Scandinavian favourite - it is very much used there. The Earl Grey latte mix is - half Assam, half Darjeeling, with bergamot, and we have treated this as a matcha, grinding the tea very fine so it dissolves, and you blend it with milk."

"The point of matcha is that if the whole leaf is ground, you get all the goodness of the leaf. Diffuse, not infuse!"



Matcha - have the consumers got there before the trade?

After several years of pushing, the message about matcha is finally getting through, says the Teapigs brand. The trade has accepted that the drink is not difficult to prepare, and consumers have begun to appreciate the health message - indeed, at a London 'wellness' show in May, Teapigs exhibited a stand dedicated entirely to the tea.

Matcha is a conventional green tea product, except that the leaves are ground down to an extremely fine powder, which dissolves – thus, the entire goodness of the leaf is consumed, and there is no wastage.

"The real trick to matcha is that you ingest the whole leaf," confirms Teapigs' Nick Kilby. "With normal green tea, you throw the leaves away – that's like throwing the spinach away and drinking the water you cooked it in!"

One problem, says Teapigs, is that as often happens with a newly-trendy product, there are fakes on the market. It is true and accepted that there are different grades of matcha tea, some of which are best for cooking, and some of which deliver a richer or lighter colour... but there have now been instances of counterfeit matcha, which is any old green tea ground down to powder and sold cheaply.

"The coffee house owner would do well to assure himself that what he is buying really is matcha," confirms Nick Kilby. "We have been doing a lot of 'educational' work over the last four years, and we have found that simple messages like authenticity and provenance do work. Shade-grown tea, which is not an issue you hear a lot about, gives an 'extra green' matcha leaf with a lot of nutrients. One reason matcha is expensive is because it takes a lot of time to grind it down... and it is done in complete darkness!"

Now that the product is widely accepted, Teapigs has been working on helping cafes promote and serve most effectively.

"You can already see how people associate green tea with slimming, health, good hair, good nails, eyes, and so on - so, to position it in a café, you would be asking: 'do you want regular tea, or super-power green tea?' Once they try it, they come back!"

The key is the dissolving.

"Matcha has to be whisked - if you pour and stir, it becomes lumpy and doesn't diffuse properly. It was always intended to be whisked, traditionally with bamboo, and this is why the matcha latte is a good idea, because of the greater diffusion."

"This is also a very good way to promote it, because customers understand latte. I've stood in coffee bars and seen customers looking at it on the menu or on posters, and saying: 'ooh, what's that?'"

"Or you can use it as the booster in a smoothie, instead of buying those additive powders. It goes very well with apple juice and grapefruit... it



Iced matcha latte (Cream Supplies)

tastes perfectly good with orange, if you don't mind the orange turning green! In all these ways, you promote it as a double-whammy of goodness."

The wholesaler Cream Supplies is now offering a matcha frappe mix, which should ideally be marketed as an energy-booster high in antioxidants, and 'a superior detoxifier'. The mix is blended with ice and water, or with milk for a creamier result. A one-kilo pack produces 25 twelve-ounce servings, and is £13.99.



This tea was discovered at the Caffe Culture show, and was exhibited by Metropolitan as an example of how teas with additions – in this case, flowers – can be given attention-getting names. Their Irish Eyes green tea featured little edible candied shamrocks.



This tea was not at the show, but actually does exist – it's a herbal tea of some kind, and it crops up on tea-bag collectors' sites (yes, they exist too). It comes from the Doctor Fruit brand, of whom we know very little. There are however several brands of that name around the world, one of which specialises in drinks for kids' school lunchboxes... so it would be as well to choose the right one.



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New approach at London Tea

There is some interesting work afoot at the London Tea Company... among which is a reference we recently caught to 'building a brand for the coffee-house sector'.

The brand is now part of the quite enormous Finlay Beverages, which is based in Yorkshire but is a 250-year old business owning its own tea plantations, with global interests in rubber and timber.

The brand is, observes marketing manager Paul Maxwell, now backed up by vast in-house knowledge.

"What is fairly unique is that we have expertise in growing, blending, and packing - there are not many tea companies who are going to be able to say that they offer tea they grew themselves!"

The importance of the brand for a caterer, says Paul, is that at a time when 'interesting' tea blends and infusions are responsible for all the growth in the tea market, it becomes important to pick a decent one. Any old off-the-shelf version of a currently-popular flavour might turn out to be an awful mistake.

"You can see the difference with our Eminent Earl Grey. This has a cleanliness to it - some Earl Greys can be 'soapy', which comes from using too much bergamot, or a 'nature identical' bergamot. We've got the right, nice crispy taste.

"The best ingredients are always the key. Try to avoid peppermint teas made with oil - you get something like toothpaste. It should be a crispy warming sensation, not a feeling like eating a whole pack of Polo mints! When a blender goes too far with peppermint oil, the result is undrinkable.

"As for red-berry infusions, which have become very popular, the main hazard is that a lot smell fantastic... but don't deliver. They're useless. There's nothing so disappointing as a berry tea which smells great but then tastes like just hot water.



"A lot of 'cost-conscious' tea brands have a problem with all this, so consider three or four similar products, and blind-taste them, not just by yourself, but with your team."

A major interest for the coffee-house trade is expected to be the brand's design. It uses a very distinctive logo,



of an outline consumer sitting on a chair - the pose changes slightly between the various products in the range, but the seat is always the 'L' of the company name, and their tea is on the table formed of the 'T'.

The pyramid bags are sealed inside clear envelopes, with also a die-cut information card.

"This style is intrinsic to the brand," remarks Paul Maxwell. "Great products are sometimes found in packs that don't help sell them, but this does."

Noble principles and hard questions

There are a vast number of tea salesmen touting for trade business, says Newby Teas, which brings up again one of our favourite puzzles - if they can't all be experts, how does the cafe owner recognise a salesman who understands his subject?

So much confusion is created by bad tea salesmen, says Newby, that the buyer can end up simply choosing the prettiest packaging or the best price.

"Nice graphic design does not protect the product inside!" says Newby, So it is better to have an armoury of 'good questions' which will sort the expert from the huckster - these are what Newby calls its Noble Principles for Selecting Tea.

They include asking precisely how close the supplier's packing facilities are to the source of the tea, and whether the brand uses a contract packer - and if so, what is their supervision of precautions against variation of temperature, odour, or humidity, and how much does the tea come in con-

tact with commercial grade plastic, cardboard or paper?

If that doesn't scare the salesman, and you bother to look at the tea, says Newby, try these tips: as well as checking the even-ness of the leaf, and checking that no odd bits of wood are included, make a cup of tea and look at the infused leaves - if they are bright, then it means that the tea is of the current season but if dull and dark, then the tea is old and not fresh.

As many people have observed, and Newby repeats, any old tea will cost between half a penny and twopence a bag... the best tea may be 12p or more, but this is the one which will return you the best profit in the long run.

There is no shortage of how-to books in the British coffee trade - some are written by people who really know what they're about, and some others have included content which is nothing less than dangerous.

What is common to most of them is that they concentrate very much on the skill of making coffee. The very newest one, published in e-book format, is different - it concentrates on the skill of working in the hospitality trade, and yet, it comes from someone who has served his time in the modern coffee bar sector.

This is David Littlejohn, most recently known for running LJ's coffee house in Soho, in the heart of London, which featured in the Allegra Top 100 coffee bars, the Independent Top 50 nationally, and was the first to win a five-star rating by ViewLondon. In recent weeks he has cropped up as a hired-hand barista manning stands at trade shows. However, before that he put in ten years or more in hotel management, which is why his new work is entitled *Get ahead in... Hospitality*.

This is a book which does not necessarily concern itself with the niceties of steaming milk. Rather, it discusses the idea that running a business such as a coffee-bar is not just about making a good product - there are wider tricks of the hospitality trade which must be understood.

For that reason, his chapters involve the importance of understanding the principles of break-even, revenue management, increasing business and retaining customers, and the hospitality trade's known concepts of revPAR and revPASH... and only in the last chapter does he get round to coffee as a specialist item.

"It is this exact point that I am hoping to address with my consultancy business and future e-books (I am already writing my second!)," David told *Coffee House*.

Is it really still the case that a great number of baristas make the classic move of leaving their employer and going out on their own? Should we consider that this is a fine and praiseworthy thing to do, and that success may still be attained - or do we take the view that anyone opening a coffee-house in the current climate is a complete loony?

"The economic downturn has given a lot of people the nudge they needed to go out on their own. People in hospitality generally find themselves working a 40-hour week, with many doing fifty, sixty or seventy hours. The new business owners I speak to tell me that if they are going to do those sort of hours they want it to be for themselves, and not another company.

"But I am still surprised by the number of people who think they can open a cafe, B&B or cake shop having had no experience in hospitality at all - there is a massive difference between enjoying sitting in your local indie and actually trying to run a profitable one

The secrets of RevPASH...



Does the coffee trade actually teach sufficient skills for the running of a coffee shop?

yourself! Even some of the really well known and long-established independent coffee houses of London only break even with little money left aside at the end of a year.

"I cannot stress enough how important it is to know the basics! If you've never heard of GP, margin or product mix and you if you can't work out contribution, net profit and break-even, then you shouldn't go anywhere near starting your own business yet.

"It may have been true that a few years ago you could open an independent and serve great coffee and that would be enough. Now, passion doesn't necessarily mean profit."

It does not help, he suggests, that the daily press keeps printing stories about the supposed vast profits to be made from a cappuccino, thus giving the idea that all café-owners are living the high life. These stories must make people think: 'with a gross margin like that, of course I'm going to make it!'

“ I am still surprised by the number of people who think they can open a cafe, B&B or cake shop, having had no experience in hospitality at all... ”

"Absolutely. We all know that the base ingredient cost of good quality double-shot espresso with milk, cup, lid, sugars and stirrer is around 40-50p, which on the face of it makes a fantastic profit if you're selling for £2.50... and I'm a big advocate of the £3 coffee.

"However, you have to sell a lot of items to make a decent overall contribution to your overheads - I started my career in pubs and hotels and I do believe their focus on numbers is streaks ahead of the rest of the hospitality industry.

"Understanding the principles behind RevPAR and RevPASH ('revenue per available rooms', and 'per available seat hour') is vital and for many people it is often the difference between staying afloat or closing. While it may sound 'scientific' or complicated, the good news is that most people are applying some of the principles of revenue management without even realising it! In my book I've broken it down

into a simple, easy-to-understand and easy-to-apply set of guides. Once you understand this you will find you start looking at your operation in a completely different way."

Equally, the Littlejohn book addresses promotion, with the experience of having done it in a tough environment (not least with the great Bar Italia a hundred yards away!)

"Promotions and marketing became part of my everyday life and it is an area that any business owner needs to get to grips with - customers have a lot of choice nowadays, and whether you are in Central London or a small village, independents need to convey their message to the best of their ability. The internet and smartphones are a vital tool for any hospitality business nowadays and I am constantly amazed at the number of businesses that have no social media presence.

"A lot of business owners also fail to properly understand the implications of

their promotions. A promotion should be designed to be great for your customers, while also being great for you, but once again there are some simple principles that are well taught in other areas of hospitality, but which seem to be forgotten by cafe owners and entrepreneurs."

The concept of staff management comes in for some work - Littlejohn knows that those who open coffee houses for 'the dream' or because they 'love coffee' are hoping to employ people who are 'passionate about coffee', and that everything will be 'cool'.

"Staffing is going to be one of your

biggest, if not the biggest cost to your business," he remarks, starkly. "It's all very well and good having an amazing barista who serves the best coffee with beautiful latte art every time, but if they are surly and miserable, then your customers are going to quickly head off somewhere else.

"If you want to have the best staff doing the best job, it is all about management. You need to ensure clear guidelines and stick to them - if you ignore the fact that the espresso machine wasn't cleaned properly at last night's close-down, I can guarantee that it will happen again.

"As with revenue management, the principles are easy to learn but it is often the adherence to the system that is lacking."

With the experience of LJs behind him, is it David's belief that there is still success to be found in the independent coffee-bar trade, even for the person who may be a perfectly good barista, but is a novice businessman? If you were transported to a provincial town and set down in the high street there... could he do it again?

"There are still plenty of opportunities for people to be successful within the coffee-bar trade but it is becoming harder as great coffee has become the new standard. Understanding all the principles behind maximising revenue and applying them diligently is vital if you are going to run a coffee shop that returns a decent wage for the hours you put in.

"Could I do it again? In the right town, absolutely. There is still a lot of growth potential... in areas like Nottingham, Bournemouth, Edinburgh or Manchester for anyone looking to carve out a market for themselves.

"I have been lucky enough to have been involved in some great hospitality businesses and to have worked with some very knowledgeable managers and proprietors. I am passionate about great hospitality, particularly from small and medium sized businesses - the family-run pubs, chef-run restaurants and barista-run coffee shops, all of these have the ability to stand out from the bland uniformity of the chains.

"Consumers know that there has never been a more important time to support these local entrepreneurs and similarly, there has never been a more important time to ensure that what you are offering and how you provide it are the very best it can be."

Get ahead in... Hospitality is available to download from Amazon.

This is Scoop Malone, the most active writer and reporter in the hot beverage trade. You can read his work in Coffee House, the trade's favourite news magazine, every month by mail for a subscription of just £25.

Details: www.coffee-house.org.uk



Lavazza chain plan hits problems

Readers will recall that in February, we reported the careful response by Lavazza to the media reports in which its franchise partner Catalyst Retail had apparently claimed to be creating 400 Lavazza Espresso cafes, and would take on the three big chains. Lavazza remarked to us that the Espresso concept was a ten-year plan, and was 'not as ambitious' as its partner had appeared to suggest.

It is now reported that the programme has hit snags. According to *Caterer and Hotelkeeper*, in a story which Lavazza has confirmed to be accurate, the property consultant involved has withdrawn from finding sites for Catalyst Retail, a bank has withdrawn support from franchisees, and some franchisees have asked for a refund of their deposit, reported to be £23,994.

It is reported that some repayments have been made.

Lavazza itself, while pointing out that it does not actually manage the franchise project itself, has said that it is 'treating very seriously the difficulties that local franchisees are facing with Catalyst Retail Limited and is actively engaged in finding a quick and positive solution taking into account the interests of potential franchisees involved. Lavazza will also take any measure which it deems appropriate to preserve the image and reputation of the Lavazza brand'.

The UK's flagship Espresso café was opened in Harrods in December 2010, along with three airport sites at Belfast, Dublin and East Midlands airports. The Espresso concept has already spread to the middle East, India, China and the USA.

The Espresso concept is still a viable idea for the UK, a Lavazza spokesman told *Coffee House*, but it will have to be rescued

extremely carefully and with thorough consideration for potential franchisees.

"The people at the franchise partner who said the chain would be 'the next Costa' have now left," said Lavazza.

"There was a lot of interest from potential franchisees, and that's the big disappointment for us – the best solution will be one that allows us to rectify the situation and get those applicants back."

A never-ending issue in the tea trade is the question of how to brew and serve a takeaway tea... the combination of tea-bag steeping time and disposal defeats every attempt. At the recent London Coffee Festival, we discovered that another attempt at the tricky problem is about to be made, this time by Joerg Muller, the blender and herbalist of Solaris Botanicals of Ireland. Expect to see this variation on the lid-and-string method appearing soon...



A rather unusual settlement has been reached in another 'name infringement' case, this time in Kansas. The Twisted Sister coffee shop had received a complaint from the band of the same name, which turns out to be the latest in twenty-four such actions by the band, in which businesses have been required to change their name and give up their internet domains. (Rather entertainingly, several of the businesses involved say they had never heard of the band!) Some have given in for the sake of economy, even though legal advice suggests they could have won in court - lawyers have said it is reasonable to argue that consumers could not confuse a modern coffee house with a 1973 rock band. In this case, the coffee shop owner accepted an offer to settle for \$100 a year to a charity, and an agreement to make limited use of the name.

To the right is, believe it or not, the ThinkGeek Build-On Brick Mug, which is selling in America for \$19.99. It's one of those 'executive relaxation' things. The mug is compatible with Lego and similar construction toys, but the mug itself is simply the base from which users work to construct their own designs – the sales material says specifically 'we do not supply the building blocks'. And below it is, again believe it or not, the kettle which was withdrawn from sale in the USA because of complaints that it looked like Adolf Hitler. Before it was withdrawn, there was a rush of late sales, and the items began appearing on Ebay at vastly higher prices!



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