

# Boughton's COFFEE HOUSE



Scoop Malone, the beverage trade's finest reporter, brings you another magazine full of trade news and issues!

November 2013

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## Cafe trade's anger at massive supermarket coffee giveaway

The high street cafe trade has complained bitterly about the recent Waitrose strategy of offering free coffee and tea to its loyalty card holders. The giveaway is alleged to have had a noticeable effect on nearby cafes – but the Office of Fair Trading says it will take no action because the supermarket has not broken the law.

The Waitrose offer is a generous one – a free tea or coffee 'every day' on production of a 'myWaitrose' card, with no purchase required. Where the supermarket has no in-house cafe, takeaways are given.

The sheer scale of the offer raises a significant problem for the high street cafe trade – Waitrose has two million cardholders, and if they all took up the offer every day, it would mean over half a billion sales a year lost to independent businesses.

The matter came to public attention when a café owner in Buckingham

reported Waitrose to the OFT, saying his coffee sales had fallen by 40 per cent since the 'aggressive marketing and unfair trading' began.

A remarkable number of cafes have since been in touch with this magazine to share their experiences.

"It has decimated our morning coffee trade," said one. Another said: "I can see customers who used to come into my tearoom in the Waitrose cafe – I wondered why I hadn't seen them recently, and now I know."

One who reported a fall in business said: "I am disappointed in Waitrose

as they have always said they are 'pro local community'."

Several from the 'artisan' side of the trade argued that quality will win, and that those serving better coffee should have no fear. However, this is divided opinion - it was universally agreed by complainants that the major point is not quality, when placed against a free gift. As another café owner remarked: "This is unfair. There's a hundred people in their café all the time, and we all know that what they're serving is a bucket of mud... but it's free."

Another remarked: "their coffee is run-of-the-mill, there will always be people out there taking a free coffee, however poor it tastes".

Questioned by this magazine, Waitrose said: "Waitrose always aims to work in harmony alongside local businesses where we trade. Indeed, we are often told that having one of our shops helps other traders because it attracts additional shoppers to the area."

Waitrose does not of course trade only in areas close to other businesses; many of its sites are remote from any competitors. However when we suggested that the claim of 'helping other traders' was unsupportable in the face of statements by neighbouring cafes that they have lost 40 per cent of their trade due to Waitrose giveaways, the supermarket said it had nothing further to add.

The Office of Fair Trading was more willing to talk about the complaint it had received:

"From a competition law perspective, we considered whether the Waitrose store in question could be considered dominant in the provision of refreshments in the local area, and concluded that would be unlikely.

"Accordingly, while we noted the possible effect on the complainant's business, the actions described would not appear to be unlawful.

"However, this does not preclude us from revisiting the matter should further evidence come to our attention."



This is the coolest coffee shop in the world, according to the MSN network. It is Truth Coffee in Cape Town, a roaster-retailer whose interior design is referred to as 'Victorian futurism steampunk' or, in the words of the founder, "what happened when Goths discovered the colour brown!" The interior is dominated by a giant and ancient Probat roaster, open to view by the customers. The café also features the only Slayer espresso machine in Africa, and has a quite unique 'coffee dispenser' used to deliver beans around the store – this is a clockwork-operated item involving over 2500 parts. The venue is the only African business ever to make the finals of the World Bar and Restaurant design awards. When Coffee House shared the styling with some British café operators, it reduced most to silence – except for Ian Steel of Atkinsons in Lancaster, who remarked: "I'd like to think we share their uncompromising attitude to placing the mystique of coffee at the core of design, which is something the indies, with their agile individualism, can exploit without being diluted by the focus-group approach to design of the chains. 'Niche not Mainstream' is the redeeming mantra... bravo!"

Even if such design may not be reflected in our own traditional cafes, Truth surely must be applauded for one recent community project well worth copying. As part of the local Deaf Awareness Week, all of the staff were taught sign language, and to test their ability with it, they had to do one entire day's service while wearing earplugs... a remarkable initiative.

The latest co-operative work between the beverage trade and the beer trade has come from Edinburgh, where the Eteaket tea company and microbrewery Barney's Beer have created two joint products - a beer tea and a tea beer. After a summer of experiments, they have created Smoky Lapsang Porter and Breakfast Brew tea. The tea is said to have 'a fabulous dark and smoky finish', whereas the brewer has suggested that the porter goes very well with a sweet or chocolatey dessert.

Costa has been given the go-ahead to set up in Wisbech, in a Grade II listed building.

The number of Australian cafes installing their own home-farm gardens is on the rise, reports the media there. It has apparently become more common for cafes to offer their own vegetables, herbs and fruit plants - the 'from our own garden' tag is a good one to see on menus. It has even been reported that some cafes in Sydney have begun to install their own bee-hives.

Burglars who broke into the High Street café in Walton, as a route through to the alcohol shelves in the neighbouring convenience store, gave themselves an unexpectedly hard time. Having broken into the café, they ripped off the wooden wall panelling before attempting to break through - but failed. The convenience store owner said: "it is a thick wall with three layers of partitions and a metal back. With chisels, it

would have taken them two years to get through!"

The latest British tea-room to be invited to demonstrate its business in Japan is Davenports Farmshop and Tea Room of Bartington, Cheshire. It is a regular occurrence for award-winning tea-rooms to be invited to demonstrate at British food festivals in Osaka, and most of the operators come back reporting a remarkable Japanese appetite for British scones. Davenports was no different - they sold 15,000 scones in thirteen days. There was a knock-on effect for their suppliers, report Ian and Belinda Davenport, because they took shipped out supplies worth £6,000 for the trip. The biggest sellers were lavender scones made with a family recipe from the 1930s.

The Bitcoin 'virtual currency' has arrived in the coffee-shop world - a Vancouver cafe is the first to house an ATM machine that gives a way to buy virtual money for cash. In theory, Bitcoin allows transactions to be made without any contact with banks; however, the financial press has said that its popularity comes from 'its role in dodgy online markets' and money-laundering. Yet, it is said, Bitcoins are increasingly used as payment for legitimate products and services, and speculators are also using them to hedge against currency fluctuations. In Vancouver, one customer said that virtual currency is roughly at the stage of e-mail twenty years ago.

## The blind-tasting coffee subscription

A new version of the subscription coffee scheme has been devised by Gideon Botha of BlankBox. Most such schemes offer a consumer one or two examples of a particular roaster's coffee every month - the BlankBox system is different in that each monthly envelope includes examples of coffees by two different craft roasters. What's more, the coffee bags have no information printed on them.

The reason, says the founder, is to give the consumer the enjoyment of blind-tasting, without the 'pre-suggestion' that tasting notes might give. Information is however available online if required. It is the roasters who decide the contents.

He has also taken on British distribution for the Impress brewer. This turns out to be one of those cafetière-like items which doubles as a drinking cup, except that this one is insulated, has what appears to be an extremely strong filter, and a flexible sip-through top with closure. The user puts fresh grounds in the outer cup and pours in hot water, allows three minutes, and then pushes the inner cup with its filter all the way down.

The product was devised by Gamil in America, and was a success for a crowdfunding site. Gideon Botha is retailing it himself but also making it available for coffee shops to sell at what is suggested to be an extremely good margin.



*The Impress*

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### Items for sale

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For sale on behalf of a customer. Both machines are well used, one is in full working order while the second has a noisy pump and exhausts steam through the group solenoids after a drink is made. Both in need of a little TLC but are complete with a total of six original group handles. Both have the plastic surrounds for the pressure gauges that are cracked and one machine is missing the knob for the power switch and a small section of the drip tray. We'd welcome sensible offers for both machines, to be sold as a package, essentially one to work and one for spares.

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#### ICONIC FAEMA E61

All the copper pipes and the tank have been completely descaled, and all the rubber o-rings and pad seals have been replaced with new ones. The group head seals & shower plates and the exhaust valves are new, as are the filter handles. The existing chrome group heads have been retained, as they show that the old girl has had a bit of a busy working life.

It has no indication of its age, as there are no identification plates on it, but all working parts are new. The seller is looking for around £3,500 ex vat for it, as a private sale, and not through his company.

Email the editor and we'll pass your message to the seller.



## Kopi luwak is OK, say the Indonesians

Following the animal-rights outcry about kopi luwak coffee (which we reported on last month), an interesting riposte has come through an opinion piece in the *Jakarta Post*, Indonesia, which suggests that western consumerisation is to blame for the situation.

Countering a request by the animal-rights body PETA, which has asked the Indonesian government to act over luwak coffee which comes from civet cats held in battery farms, the newspaper says that truly 'wild' kopi luwak should be celebrated as an Indonesian delicacy.

"Producing food by abusing animals is a stain on human civilisation", said the newspaper. "But the issue is due to the food commodification regime, which was pioneered by the western world."

"Greed has turned people to engage in farming civet cats to produce luwak coffee. A simple coffee grower in a remote area just sees the opportunity to get additional income by catering to the needs of their consumers – the buyers are the ones who bear the responsibility."

By contrast, said the *Jakarta Post*, genuine 'wild' luwak coffee is a legitimate and ethical product.

"The wild luwak coffee has an excellent taste which cannot be compared with the caged luwak coffee. This established business model involves picking up civet droppings in the wild, living harmoniously with nature and respecting the welfare of the animals."

"This traditional way is cheap for the farmer – they do not need to purchase the wild civets, build the cages, or feed them. Harvesting wild luwak coffee is free for the farmers, as nature makes it available every day, if they are willing to walk far and work hard to find it in the rainforest."

"The volume is not as big as a normal coffee businesses, but it is a significant additional income, enough to sustain lives without harming the environment like illegal logging. It gives us a source of national pride, and is an icon of our food culture to be proud of (although it is bizarre to some people)."

"Superimposing foreign values over a heritage is misleading and unfair for the majority who practice good values in the wild luwak business. Criticism and condemnation through a global megaphone is just mediocre hippie voices without any solid vision to solve poverty and the future of the world's rainforests."

"We should see wild luwak coffee as part of our national interest, and develop it so we can help reduce poverty and save our rainforests."

Three luxury hotels in Hong Kong have now stopped serving the coffee. The Langham, InterContinental and Landmark Mandarin said they had been unaware of the animal-cruelty allegations behind it.



What is this design? It is, we assure you, the atomic structure of the caffeine molecule. The espresso cups and mugs, designed by Joaquin Baldwin, are available online from Shapeways.

## Aussie opens first indie drive-thru

An Australian barista suggests that he may have been the first person to open a truly independent drive-through in the UK - and is surprised that the concept is not already more widely taken up here. He is Geoff Box of Coffee Drive in Edinburgh, who says he wonders if Brits think it 'unseemly' to go to drive-throughs, and that he is testing the theory of 'if you make it great, they'll come'.

The venture has now opened in Edinburgh's Duddingston Park South.

"My experience comes from using coffee shops, and then two years of research and barista training," he told us. "My key role is in the business side - we have an excellent and more experienced barista to run the shop."

The practicalities involve a distant menu board before drivers reach the single window.

"We have an illuminated menu board that stands alone on the entrance drive so the driver can stop and make their selection. The order is placed in person at the serving window – we like to ask how they like their milk, sugar, etc., so it is better to talk directly to the customer instead of with a microphone and speaker."

"On the site we have running now we only have the one drive-thru serving hatch. The shop design does allow for serving from both sides and a serving window for pedestrians."

Working the queue, he tells us, is not a problem.

"The customer queue moves along much quicker than in a restaurant environment – we don't need to set out plates and saucers and we don't have the theatre of latte art and presentation to deal with. As the customer does not have to park and get in to the shop and then queue, they are still saving time and have not so far offered any complaints."

Many of the infamous coffee-scalding cases have

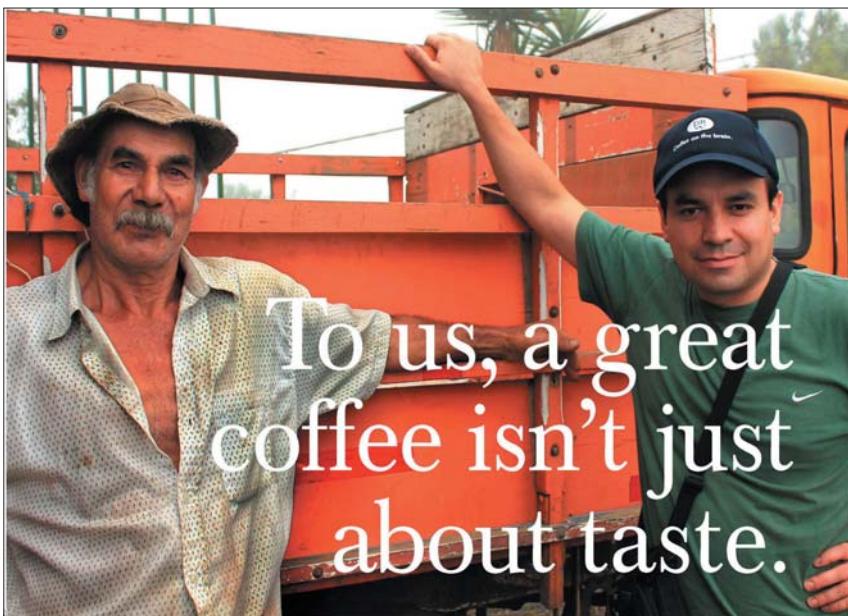


occurred at drive-through sites in America, during the awkward handover from server to car window – another case came up last month in California, with a \$2 million claim against McDonald's, for injuries when a hot coffee was spilled at a drive-through.

How does Coffee Drive make absolutely sure that the handling and cups are secure?

"By knowing the danger and by training the staff well, we make sure that does not happen. We don't hand the cup into the car, but hold the cup between the car and the serving window. This allows the customer to reach the cup and then take it into the car."

The business tries to sell as many local products as possible – the 'porridge bars' (how very Caledonian!) are made two miles away, and though the biscuits come from the western isles, they are hand-made in wood-burning stoves.



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Coffee Continental, the Welsh café which launched in 2010 on the theme of serving 'truly unusual' speciality cakes, and coffee and hot chocolate as inspired by the Austrian coffee houses, has opened a second café, in the Castle Arcade, Cardiff.

A delightful story has cropped up in the Scots press concerning Hilary Smith, who made what was described as a 'one in a million' recovery from a brain tumour. On coming round after the operation, she resolved to live life to the full, and do the things she had always wanted to do. One of those things was running a tea-room - and she has now opened Ta Ta Bella's Tea Room in Paisley. (The name apparently comes from a local rag-and-bone man of many years ago).

We have recently reported on Clink, the first public-access restaurant to be opened in a prison - Cafedirect commented to us that in their barista training sessions, the prisoners had been 'the most engaging staff they have seen from any client - keen to learn and wanting a future'. This has now been followed by the Grange coffee shop, launched by HMP Kirklevington Grange in Yarm, Cleveland. The staff are, we are told, 'criminals turned qualified baristas', and the café is open to the public for eleven hours a day.

Another trade show is on this month - this is the Takeaway Expo, 28-29 November at Olympia, which may feature a 'coffee village' area.

The attempt to keep a long-standing café operator at Wokingham station has failed, despite a petition of 1,200 signatures in support. Customers had wanted the independent Steamers café to remain a feature of the re-developed station, but South West Trains has chosen Cafe Destino to take over. The outgoing operator said: "We had a realistic and strong tender, and people want us to be there - the petition speaks volumes. The train company obviously didn't want us there - they've taken our goodwill and handed it on a platter to someone else."

The new Wired coffee bar in Nottingham city centre is intended to 're-establish the idea of cafés being a social hub', the new owners have told their local paper. Très and Vanessa Gretton-Roche say their new venture is 'an independent artisan coffee bar appealing to the switched-on, culturally aware and discerning customer'.

The Rosie Lee & Me café of Horsham has run a project in which customers have donated pet food to feed injured and homeless wildlife being looked after by local charity Care for the Wild. The owner, Jane Hart-Coombes, reports being overwhelmed by the public response.

It has been confirmed that Blue Rainbow Aparthotels of Manchester are indeed to set up Tea 42, a café which is intended to be the first in a planned chain of 20.

## Cafes are the big carbon-footprint villains

**What is the carbon footprint of a pound of coffee? A food enthusiasts' blog in America has confirmed the general idea that the biggest contributor to the energy 'cost' of coffee is indeed at the serving end of the chain.**

A writer from the Counter Culture coffee company in the US suggested that a pound of coffee creates a carbon footprint of eleven pounds.

You would think, said the writer, that this would be largely accounted for at origin, with all the energy of processing at the farm, and all the shipping by sea. And yet, two studies have found that less than a quarter of the carbon footprint of coffee comes from origin, perhaps because so much low-tech effort is involved. This energy, it is neatly observed, is mostly in the form of elbow grease, not axle grease.

Shipping is not as harmful as it seems - coffee is in less danger of

being crushed than fruit, so can be crammed into shipping containers more closely and with less packaging.

In the consuming country, roasters contribute about fifteen per cent of coffee's overall carbon footprint.

But this is still a minor figure. The biggest contribution to carbon footprint, it is suggested, comes at the café and the final brewing.

It is estimated that of the eleven pounds of carbon emissions that the average pound of coffee creates, half of that is caused at the final stage.

The final retailer, or café, is by far the single biggest contributor to the carbon footprint of coffee.



Starbucks has opened its first Teavana 'tea bar' in New York. The store is deliberately designed to look unlike a Starbucks - it has 'fashionably-grey' walls, light wood and 'museum-like' lighting, and has a 'wall of tea' which perhaps looks not unlike some Nespresso showrooms. The atmosphere is described as 'softer and less bustling' than Starbucks, whose top man has said that in five or ten years, it will do for tea in America what the chain achieved for coffee.

The Health and Safety Executive's first prosecution in the matter of the espresso machine explosion incident in a Sainsbury's store in September 2010 has indeed now come to court. The first stage of the HSE's case against the machine manufacturers Elektra was at Aldershot magistrates' court, and although it had been predicted that the matter would be referred to Crown Court, there will now be another hearing before Basingstoke magistrates, on 2nd December, for 'a full hearing on jurisdiction' concerning how and where the case will later be heard.



It is rather traditional that at this time of year, the Lavazza calendar appears... there can be a bit of one-upmanship involved if you're lucky enough to lay your hands on one, and it always has an unexpected theme. This year's calendar is all about chefs. Lavazza has often been involved with creative chefs, not least in its experiments with molecular gastronomy with such players as Ferran Adria, the 'ultimate visionary' of Italian cuisine. The 2014 calendar shows a collection of top Italian chefs in situations which are playful, and as always with the Lavazza calendar, slightly surreal. The man bringing a new approach to seafood (above) is Michelin-starred chef Antonino Cannavacciuolo.

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## Tea finally arrives on cafe menus...

This magazine has often got into trouble for daring to question the findings of research houses who publish surveys on the beverage trade, but we feel compelled to report two of the latest, which have appeared in recent weeks. It may be the silly season for such subjects, but we are intrigued to learn that more than half of British consumers now go to 'coffee cafes' at least monthly, and 44 per cent do so at least weekly. We also learn that hot tea is making a big appearance on British cafe menus, and that consumers are capable of deciding whether they consider a drink to be priced fairly.

The visitor figures come in the UK *Cafe Consumer Trend Report* by Technomic, an American research house.

Having pointed out in the past that some 'research' reports of the numbers of customers supposedly visiting British coffee shops have later been discredited for being too wildly optimistic, we felt we had to question the claim that more than half of British consumers visit coffee shops so frequently.

Asked whether they meant that those already known to visit coffee shops do so regularly, Technomic insisted, although perhaps vaguely, that 58 per cent of the over-18 consumers it spoke to did indeed visit coffee shops once a month.

Going on to say that the 'coffee café' sector (their term) has experienced a sales rise of 12.2 per cent, Technomic then added that 'the total number of speciality coffees such as mochas, lattes and cappuccinos has jumped on menus by 17 per cent year on year'.

As it seemed odd that these basic drinks should only now be appearing on many menus, we asked about their findings concerning newer speciality drinks, hoping for details on the incidence of flat whites, cortados and the like. Technomic responded: 'what newer speciality drinks are you referring to?'

The most puzzling item was a remark by a Technomic spokesman, who said: "UK menu-development trends also point to an upswing in hot tea, which has increased its presence on cafe menus by about 17 per cent year-on-year."

On probing the curiosity that 'hot tea' has only just appeared on the menus

of British cafes, we now suspect that the research may refer to the number of different tea items listed on a menu.

If this is so, then on all café menus, the number of tea choices has increased from 16 items in 2011 to 23 items in 2012. On 'coffee-café' menus only, hot tea increased from 10 items to 13 items.

Elsewhere, some curious research by a German neurobiologist has concluded that consumers will be willing to pay more for a cup of coffee, and that the evidence for this is in their brainwaves.

The scientist displayed pictures of the same cup of Starbucks coffee on a screen several times, but with different prices. As he did so, he monitored the brain activity of those watching the screen.

He found that consumers' brains reacted strongly to prices that seemed very low or too high.

In a follow-up experiment, he measured sales at a university vending machine which priced basic coffee at 70 cents and cappuccinos at 80 cents, but left students to offer their own pricing for macchiato – over several weeks, the price paid levelled off at 95 cents, which he confirmed by then doing a similar exercise with pictures and brain scans.

His conclusion, which will astonish the coffee trade, is that consumers are prepared to pay higher prices for what they consider to be speciality drinks.

As a side issue, he also concluded that while Starbucks charges €1.80 for a small white coffee, consumers would be willing to pay up to €2.40 for it, and that therefore the international chain is 'losing millions'.

The newest in a very long line of legal cases raised by Starbucks concerns a Thai roaster and coffee stall called Starbung, which has created a green-and-white logo which features a man in a skullcap pouring coffee and holding up a victory sign. Starbucks is claiming 300,000 baht (about £6,000) and a further £600 a month until the operators remove the signage, and has reportedly even demanded that the operators be arrested. The coffee stall operator says the sign is inspired by religious and halal imagery and colours, and that they will not change it.



### The Wicked Coffee Company A coffee loving, self-motivated team player, who can sell; is this you?

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Paddy and Scott's coffee has sponsored the entire first-team sports activities at Framlingham College - the company's logo is now on all shirts worn by the hockey, rugby, netball, cricket and girls' tennis teams. Paddy Bishopp is a former first-team sports pupil at the college.

Costa has run into complaints within a week of opening in Henley. The chain put tables and chairs on the pavement and immediately received complaints about blocking the pathway - although the chain has now applied for permission, the highways authority and town council are reportedly opposing the application.

An American paper company has devised a new form of coffee-related recycling - the Whiting company of Wisconsin has taken hessian coffee sacks and turned them into speciality paper. The idea apparently began three years ago when a coffee company was looking to throw out vast numbers of used sacks; the paper-makers realised that hessian, or 'burlap', is made from the same kind of fibres as high-grade paper, and the result is now used in sketch books and greetings cards.

FC United of Manchester, the community football club founded by 'disaffected and disenfranchised' supporters of the rather more famous club in the same city, has stepped in to save a local café from closure. The football club has developed into a quite remarkably active community organisation, and as part of its activities will now run the Lakeside Café at Boggart Hole Clough on a temporary basis as the local authority searches for a new permanent tenant. The venue is council-owned, but the sitting tenant has been forced to retire through ill health. FC United has arranged to keep the venue open

and for it to also serve as a training café in partnership with Manchester College.

The newly-opened NN Café in Northampton has launched with an evening dedicated to Nick Drake, the folk musician who died in 1974 but whose work has continued to be followed by many. The new café held the book launch of Nick Drake: Dreaming England, by an associate professor in popular music at the University of Northampton.

Caffe Nero has reported revenue up almost 11 per cent for the year to the end of May. Turnover was £204.3m and operating profit rose ten per cent to £21.1m. The increase in like-for-like sales met the company's target range of 2-4 per cent a year.

The number of cycle cafes continues to rise, but a new variant on the idea has come from the Czech city of Brno - customers can walk into a coffee shop, put down the equivalent of about £10, and hire a cycle for a day. The only requirement is to return it to any of the participating coffee shops. Although it is still a small system, with only a handful of businesses involved, early reports are of great popularity and usage - and little or no theft of the bikes.

There are reported to be two rival applications for drive-through coffee shops at Gloucester Quays. One is said to be a Costa franchise, the other an independent venture.

Adam and Eve are due to meet in Nottingham - the new Eve coffee bar is to be run by local college students, and the college already runs the neighbouring Adams brasserie. Eve is to become one of the college's 'learning companies', a wholly-owned subsidiary providing students with formal work experience.

## Wi-fi cafes – hotspots for identity theft?

The Huffington Post, the online news and blog aggregator which was the first online medium to win a Pulitzer prize for journalism, has addressed the perennial question of wi-fi squatters in cafes, and has inspired the question of whether café owners can put up their 'rules of the house' for wi-fi use.

The suggestion is that those who sit in a coffee shop for several hours, using the facilities but not buying anything, should be subject to certain conditions - plugging a 4-way adaptor into a power socket and using more than one appliance should be banned unless the user actually invites other customers to share it; laptop users should use only one chair and one part of a table, all sound should be turned off, and purchases of around \$10 an hour should be considered the acceptable minimum. Notably, said the writer, users themselves should be aware that unguarded items will 'certainly' be stolen if the user leaves the table, and that free wi-fi is unprotected, so sensitive personal information should never be used.

At the same time, Jumio Inc, which is a 'next generation credentials management company', has warned that coffee shop customers must be wary of which wi-fi network they are connecting to. A new fraud, it is said, involves identity theft through a scam operated inside cafes.

The fraudster sits in a coffee shop that offers free wi-fi and uses a laptop to broadcast a wireless network that is named exactly like the venue's official network. Customers log on to this hotspot, which contains malware that allows the fraudster to access their machine. He can amass vast amounts of personal information in a short time, if customers visit 'secure' sites using their passwords.

Coffee shops are one of Jumio's top five locations for such identity theft.



## Teapigs' birthday giveaway

Teapigs, the irreverent tea brand famous for pioneering pyramid tea-bags, has celebrated its seventh year in business with a 'free tea day' – several trade clients served free teas to their customers, and the brand's own team visited various London tube stations handing out 25,000 free enveloped samples of Teapigs everyday tea.

"In seven years, we have made a real tea revolution," the brand's Nick Kilby told us.

"Have you seen the number of brands now offering real leaf tea in a pyramid mesh bag? And the number of foodservice outlets now serving such bags? So we thought we would use our birthday to celebrate what we've helped to achieve."

Among Teapigs' new blends is a stronger Earl Grey which features both Assam and Rwandan teas, for those who have requested 'a little more oomph' in that traditional tea.



This sounds almost unbelievable, but is true - the Kalashnikov cafe in Poland really is themed to 'celebrate' the Russian assault rifle. An online review says it is 'patronised by young alternative types; the decor pays homage to its namesake by cleverly photo-shopping the famous Russian assault rifle into the sepia pin-ups on the walls, with a few stray Soviet radios and gas-masked mannequins laying around'.

Dame Kelly Holmes, the retired Olympic athlete who proposes to open a coffee shop in a former newsagent's shop in Hildenborough, has faced objections from residents who have said parking will be an issue with the venue. The athlete herself had stated in her original application that she expected a lot of her customers to be people already living in the village, who would walk to the café. While accepting her name would result in initial interest in the cafe, she said: "I certainly do not envisage large numbers of fans camped outside." Her application has the support of the local parish council. The application was considered by councillors at the end of October, but a decision was deferred.

The next step in coffee capsules will be the use of true high-quality, artisan-roasted, speciality coffee inside the little single-serve plastic holder. It is a prediction we have made before, and it has now been repeated by Cafepod, the maker of Nespresso-compatible capsules.

Cafepod's view is that public and trade perception of capsules has now gone beyond the obvious view of 'convenience', and that as compatibility becomes a bigger issue, the quality of the coffee in the little pot will now become the big differentiating factor between products.

Indeed, it is now suggested, if a 'compatible' does not now invite a quality comparison with the original Nespresso product, then it doesn't matter how much cheaper the compatible it might be – the consumers will not select it.

"There are now two schools of thought," the brand's Peter Grainger told *Coffee House*. "There are those users who buy totally into the Nespresso branding, for whom Nespresso is the equivalent of Apple.

"The other users have accepted the idea of the generic capsule for convenience, and to them, we can now push the quality argument.

"We are getting to the point where these capsule users realise that all capsules are not the same, that there is a certain science behind what goes into them, and that 'automatic' does not have to mean 'commodity'."

The evidence is coming from the retail market, he says – "things have now begun jumping for us in the supermarkets... some areas have shown a massive demand."

There is also a new attitude towards pricing.

In the early days of capsule coffee, when some top-brand machines were 'placed' in high-profile restaurants for the sake of publicity, the general catering trade recoiled from the high perceived cost. This too has changed, says Cafepod.

"We are already at the stage where it is known that a capsule will give you a good coffee anywhere... from boardrooms to canteens," says Peter Grainger.

"The new reason that awareness is spreading through the catering sector is because of the realisation of the ability to measure and control cost – it is now seen that you can measure what you get from a hundred capsules easier than you can from a kilo of beans."

Cafepod's production is, unusually for capsules, a British operation.

## Capsules - when will we see the first true 'artisan' one?



Peter Grainger

based on renewable, natural resources including plant starches and tree by-products. However, the company has declined to tell us precisely which capsule systems it is working with, except for the Rogers brand in America.

(Rogers itself says that single-serve coffee is now so big that nine billion capsules go to landfill in the USA every year. This is the equivalent of 16,500 shipping containers.)

Elsewhere, Unilever has claimed to be 'bringing tea into the 21st century' with a capsule product which it is aiming at café owners. This is Tea Fusion, which claims to deliver a high-quality leaf tea in under a minute.



Unilever's Tea Fusion capsule system

"We looked to partner with a British roaster and spoke to pretty well all of them – it was Lincoln and York who said 'this is the future'. They are clearly a roaster which likes to stay ahead of the curve, they know that markets change, and that you can no longer say: 'it's always been done this way...'"

Indeed, suggests Grainger, the next big step will be when the smaller and proud geek-level artisan roasters decide to get involved in capsules.

"One of these days, one of those small roasters is going to think: 'what if I start putting a really great artisan-roasted coffee into these capsules?'

"It will only take one of them...!"

A rather unexpected example of this has already cropped up in America. Death Wish coffee, which launched as 'the world's strongest coffee' and has become the top-selling whole-bean coffee through Amazon, has taken capsules up and says it now has the world's strongest single-serve coffee capsules, compatible with K-cup, the format widely used in America.

Meanwhile, compatible makers will have noted two recent court cases which will work to their advantage. The European Patent Office has revoked Nestle's patent on the Nespresso system, and Keurig, the pioneer of single-serve coffee in America, has also lost a patent case.

In this, another company had made a capsule to be compatible with Keurig brewers, and the court held that 'the notion of patent exhaustion applied' – Keurig sold its patented brewers without conditions, the court said, and purchasers therefore had the right to use them in any way they chose.

The other big current aspect of capsules is the environmental one.

Several makers now claim various levels of biodegradability for capsules, and the new 'pod-capsule' from Biome Bioplastics has been launched as 'one of the first sustainable packaging alternatives in the booming single-serve market'.

Biome appears to have developed a collection of compostable materials



A neat little dig at the capsule concept has come from Jura machines, in the latest of its advertisements featuring the endorsement of tennis star Roger Federer. In this, he is shown asking for a coffee in the style of James Bond ordering a vodka martini, but with the words: 'latte macchiato please – ground, not capsuled'.



### Boughton's Coffee House

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One of the trade's more distinctive suppliers has a notable birthday this month - Cafeology, which was set up specifically to supply Fairtrade-certified coffee, tea and chocolate to the out-of-home beverage trade, is ten years old in the middle of November. The founder Bryan Unkles will not be in the UK to celebrate, however... because, quite typically, he will be on yet another visit to origin to visit his farmers.

Ten years ago, founders Bryan Unkles and Andy McClatchey were among the first to focus on ethically-sourced beverages.

"I had been with Metropolitan Coffee, which distributed Segafredo coffee," Bryan Unkles told *Coffee House*. "It was roasted in Holland, and that's where I happened to first see the Max Havelaar logo. (Havelaar was one of the very earliest ethical-coffee labels).

"I had already done some research into ethically-sourced coffee, and I did very much want to work with it, but we had decided to do it only if I was sure of the quality of the coffee."

The emergence of Cafeology came very shortly after the launch of the similar, but bigger, Cafedirect.

"That was a complete coincidence. There was no idea of copying what they were doing, and I guess the two companies were set up to go in different directions, because it soon became pretty clear that Cafedirect was being spoken about as the major multiples retail brand of Fairtrade coffee, whereas that's not what I wanted to do. The idea of working with supermarkets scared me at the time.

"We do now do some retail, but our main business is for the out-of-home catering market... and there is some truth in the idea that caterers like a brand which their customers can't buy on a supermarket shelf.

"Where Cafeology has succeeded well at retail is through garden centres and farm shops, who also love the idea of selling something that the customer cannot get at Tesco at half the price.

"These places are now really excellent at their marketing - you realise how much garden centres and farm shops have turned into a serious trade when you see that coach parties now run outings to some of these places."

The aim of Cafeology from the beginning was to work in Fairtrade-certified products. The Fairtrade Foundation, as we have reported so many times, has a chequered reputation in the coffee trade, not least for being bureaucratic to work with. Has Cafeology achieved a good working relationship with the Foundation?

Bryan Unkles' reply comes with a chuckle.

"When I first sat down with Fairtrade ten years ago, in what was then their tiny little office with a dozen people in it, they really didn't take me seriously.

# Cafeology celebrates a birthday at origin

Cafeology, the brand set up to sell only ethically-traded coffee, has completed ten years of work with farmers... with an unexpected development

I was just some northerner looking to start a small coffee company.

"We do now get better communication from them. They are now much better at understanding out-of-home matters, and it was good that they tried an autumn coffee promotion this year.

"The reason we have to be careful with Fairtrade is because we do not intend to promote our coffee as something people should buy because it's Fairtrade... we want them to buy it because it's good! So we have never gone in with all guns blazing, pinning the clients up against the wall and saying 'you must buy this because it's Fairtrade'.

"We do tend to be a little more subtle than that."

Some time ago, Unkles told this magazine that he believed most caterers were interested in the concept of Fairtrade, but that the trade did not entirely understand the cause.

"They still like the idea, without understanding it fully. Most people understand that Fairtrade 'does some good', but they don't understand things like Fairtrade pricing.

"Recognition of the idea of ethical sourcing is one thing, understanding is another. Our business is not 'it's Fairtrade', but is certainly about provenance, and explaining where our coffees come from."

**“ We do not intend to promote our coffee as something people should buy because it's Fairtrade... we want them to buy it because it's good! ”**

- Bryan Unkles

This, acknowledges Bryan Unkles, brings in some curiosities. It is far too tempting for coffee brands to promote Fairtrade coffee in the same tired old ways - what the chief executive of Fairtrade International, Harriet Lamb, once described to us as 'pictures of grinning farmers'.

"We do not have the 'grinning farmers' attitude," returns Bryan Unkles firmly. "We like visual impact and colour, but I worry that it can be patronising to have a picture of a grinning farmer. We feature our farmers in a different way - we believe that it is important to tell their story."

Fairtrade is still not widely promoted on the high street. Cafeology's client base is widening, from train operating companies to the UK's biggest teach-



Happy birthday, partner - Bryan Unkles and some coffee farmers fly the flag on the hills of origin

ing hospital and even Charlton Athletic football club... but Fairtrade is still seen more in workplaces and colleges than on the high street. Why is it still very unusual to see a coffee-house actively promoting Fairtrade coffee?

Some have begun to do it well, notes Bryan Unkles.

"Coleman's Deli, at Hathersage in the peak district, have canvasses on their walls talking about the producers in an informative and factual way. Many consumers are shown a coffee bush, see a cherry, and don't understand where the coffee comes from..."

owner and want to talk to Cafeology, you really will almost certainly be talking direct to us, and we are the kind of company for whom clients' calls on a Saturday are not ignored - they get answered, and dealt with.

"As a result, we have already succeeded in creating some hotbed Cafeology areas... the midlands is very good for us."

In general, the biggest hindrance to Fairtrade coffee remains the matter of quality - there are still some coffee roasters who decline to use Fairtrade coffee because they do not think it is good enough, and yet some certified coffees have won awards. Very rarely does anyone refer to a 'great' Fairtrade coffee... except on the Cafeology logo!

Has Fairtrade coffee yet achieved 'greatness'?

"Yes, I think it has. From my point of view, the quality we achieve is excellent. Colombia is a world leader in coffee marketing and quality control, and I have spent time there, seeing the way they monitor coffee quality. I was stunned to see the checks which are carried out everywhere, and all because the coffee carries the name of their country."

Originally, Cafeology had its coffee roasted coffee in Holland, and bought from a limited number of origins, nearly all Brazilian. Now it sources from more countries, and its coffee is now roasted in the UK.

"Because of where we come from, people tell me I must roast in Yorkshire... but I do not pretend to roast my own coffee! I do insist that we roast in the UK, and when we decided on this, we approached six coffee roasters... not many of whom

replied. We do now have a very strong relationship with Masteroast, and the quality-control measures they have put in place for us work very well. Our roaster does a bloody good job for us, and does it consistently."

Having become established as a supplier of Fairtrade coffee, the big new surprise about Cafeology is that it has suddenly started doing business with another certification. It has created the Cereza brand of Rainforest Alliance certified coffee, in a new product which also supports Coffee Kids, the non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the lives and livelihoods of coffee farming families.

We teased Bryan Unkles that he would now have to change his promotional strapline to read: 'great coffee, great causes', in the plural - but seriously, does working with two certifying bodies not simply dilute his original theme?

No, comes the answer - because his new brand Cereza is not part of Cafeology.

"This has been a fascinating exercise, and we've had to be very careful about it," he replied.

"Cafeology was always set up to be Fairtrade-only, and it always will be. The new brand Café Cereza came up because we were being asked for Rainforest Alliance coffee.

"I will always fight the Fairtrade corner, but I have to respect that there are clients who say they don't believe in Fairtrade – that decision is up to them.

"I also respect and believe in the



*Taking the brand to the origin – the farmer sees his beans in British packaging*

Rainforest Alliance, and when we looked at the commercial opportunities, we saw that there were some places, such as food courts, who wanted 'a second coffee', with an entirely different feel to it.

"There was no point in offering them another Fairtrade brand, but a different ethically-sourced choice, based on entirely different taste profiles, would give us new opportunities.

"The new coffee comes from the Monte Sion co-operative of El Salvador, a lovely little producer group, and it has turned out to be a real choice."

We have often reported that the ethical-buying companies like to bring their farmers to the UK, but that these growers are always paraded around the star clients, and very rarely get to see an average coffee shop. It is a Cafeology ambition to even this up.

"The wonderful thing about Cafeology is that we know where our coffee comes from, and we do know the farmers' co-operatives. I will be spending our 10th anniversary with our producer Roberto Mata at Coope Dota in Costa Rica this month – this was the first producer group I met, back in 2008, and now we purchase directly from them.

"Francisco Herrera from the Asoapia coffee co-operative in Colombia will be here next year, and he's very keen to see where his coffee is going... we did bring him over once before, but unfortunately what he got to see was Glasgow in a snowstorm! Next time, Coleman's Deli is the kind of place we shall take him to see.

"I wish I could bring more farmers over to see for themselves, but we can't, so we rely on their elected chairman, Francisco, to tell them about the trade here."

How much do farmers know about what happens to their coffee here?

"I don't want to sound patronising about this, but I was recently talking to Enrique, one of the farmers, and he was asking me no end of questions about what happens here. Now, I don't know how much he and the other farmers could relate to what I told them... but I know they wanted to understand.

"Because of this, I often have to tell them that I come from near Manchester... that's hard for a Yorkshireman to do, but Manchester United is one of the few names they know!"

In recent weeks, the commodity price of coffee has nose-dived. Are we now in one of the periods when his Fairtrade-certified farmers are glad of their certified status, which gives them a guaranteed minimum price?

"At the moment, Fairtrade is having a massive impact on our farmers," confirms Bryan Unkles.

"A problem with Fairtrade is that people criticise it in times when prices are high, when the minimum price doesn't mean anything... but I can tell you categorically that when it needs to kick in, the farmers are very pleased to get it. I have spoken to producers over the last few weeks, and they all say this.

"Coffee prices have gone crazy again, and this is when they need help. Back in February, I saw first-hand the damage the roya disease had done, and I said that as a result, there was only one way prices could go, and that was upwards. Who would have predicted where they are now?"

And that, says Cafeology, is the crux of things for any supplier or trader with a genuine interest in the situation of coffee farmers. For all the farmers might express interest in what is happening to their coffee in Britain, the real interest of the growers remains centred on the far more basic matter of survival.

"Whenever I ask Francisco what more I can do for the farmers in his co-operative," notes Bryan Unkles, "he always says he can answer in three words: 'sell more coffee'!"

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The true value of an awards scheme is in whether it sparks any worthwhile discussion – and this year's BSA awards most certainly did that.

Long before the results were announced, the judges had commented that they were disappointed with the standard of espresso generally being served in the UK.

The winner of their 'best espresso' prize has now added his own views, sparking the bigger question – if the catering trade isn't serving good espresso, what are we going to do about it?

This winner was Mike Haggerton of the Habitat café in Aberfeldy, Perthshire, who won with a coffee roasted by Has Bean of Stafford. He later remarked that the problems the judges had found elsewhere might suggest basic principles of training need to be re-thought.

Basic barista training, he suggested, has concentrated too much on the 'process' of it – the general received wisdom that seven grammes of espresso, in 30ml water, at 92c, for 25 seconds, gives good espresso.

What this misses, he pointed out, is the question of taste.

"Espresso is difficult, and the level of understanding of it is poor, among both caterers and customers. It is seen as a bitter drink, and 99 per cent of the time it is, in most places. And that is seen as acceptable because many people haven't tasted a well-made espresso brewed with great beans, roasted for flavour."

# Do we need to re-train for better espresso?

## Most British espresso fails to meet judges' standards

The majority of espresso failed by the assessors in the first stage of this year's Beverage Standards Association awards, which involved the tasting of the first 100 cups of espresso served across Britain, has shown that 50 per cent of espresso served was not up to scratch. "Our expectations are not 'high in the sky,'" head judge René Petersen told Coffee House. "Our expectations are not expecting world-class coffee, but the standard of performance, basically, has to be high for us to award it."



René Petersen

The point of the BSA awards is not, as in some trade schemes, just to hand out prizes. Instead, the idea is to highlight the need for good practice in beverages, and how to allow venues to improve. The judges' report also shows that they have been assessing an increasing number of entries from around the world as bad – maybe

Why is it so important? Because espresso is the basis of every important drink on the coffee menu. However, Mike added, poor espresso is not necessarily the fault of frontline serving staff.

"Our poor espresso culture has been built over many years of staff being told by equipment suppliers and trainers that 'this is the correct way'."

"The goalposts of espresso have now been moved, but most people have not been told.

"It can be better now because of improvements in farming, different roast styles, developments in grinding and brewing technology.

"Unfortunately, whilst this is well known amongst specialty coffee professionals, the message has so far failed to fully reach 'normal' cafes and coffee businesses. The common belief still seems to be that making espresso is just a matter of buying some beans and the machine will do

It was suggested in the judging of this year's Beverage Standards Association awards that the average standard of espresso just isn't good enough. If that is so... what can we do about it?

*Left: our original report*

the rest... and I hear that a lot from people in the hospitality industry.

"We need to encourage change, but do so sensitively, and I think that a much greater focus on training is one way we can improve things.

"That means, of course, that we also need to improve the standard of the training that is out there, otherwise we'll just reinforce the old ways, and the nation's espresso will remain black, flat and bitter with three lumps of sugar!

"Trainers need to be re-trained – and suppliers need to stop telling trade customers that one day's training is all their staff will need."

This started an extremely lively debate. We invited a number of trade players to comment, and were overwhelmed with comments.

Haggerton's 'best espresso' award was sponsored by Kimbo Coffee, whose Angus McKenzie was quick to support the winner's views.

"The barista champion James Hoffmann once said that 96 per cent of the coffee in the world is pretty bad, and fundamentally, he's correct! It's hard to accept without damaging our industry's ego, but we have to accept that it is only when you have your espresso nailed, that you have the base for a good coffee business.

"Following the 'process' is not enough. Coffee is a living thing, and it changes – you have to train staff to associate the 'process' with the taste of what is coming out of the machine."

This strays into the question of the coffee geek versus the everyday catering staffer – it is known that you simply are not going to get every staff member 'passionate' about coffee. True, agreed McKenzie, but there is a good commercial reason for trying.

"There are reasons why you must train to a high standard. If you train to a very high standard and the staff later lapse, they will still have in them the knowledge that a high standard exists. Training to the highest degree gives the café-owner the biggest chance of always keeping to a decent standard.

"When trainers send trainees back out into the world inspired and driven, instead of simply telling them 'now you can make coffee', then café operators get a better long-term result.

"That's why trainers cannot do less!

You cannot just train to an 'OK' standard!"

Training in the general catering trade comes both from suppliers' staff and independent trainers. Are these the people at fault?

There is a certain problem with one kind of trainer, agreed Richard Norman of Mad About Coffee, the engineer who also distributes the Barista Bible training aids. This is seen from certain major brands whose dictatorial attitude is 'you need our coffee, and you make it our way'.

"Trainers are not there to brainwash the caterers," he argued. "They have to take their blinkers off, and be able to look beyond the brand and the 'process', and see what the customer's business actually needs."

Blinkered brands aside, one of the trade's most established top trainers, Paul Meikle-Janney of Coffee Community, is not sure that trainers in general should carry all the blame.

**“** The goalposts of espresso have moved - but most people haven't been told **”**

- Mike Haggerton

"The area of worst coffee in the UK is in the hospitality trade outside of the coffee shop specialists. High-end restaurants and hotels particularly need to raise their coffee game in line with their upmarket status."

"Many of these operations do not engage with coffee training at all, and a trainer can have little impact on a company that does not care."

It is, he acknowledged, true that some bad training does exist.

"There are undoubtedly people out there training 'barista skills' who are not best qualified to do so (I noticed several major mistakes in a video by one 'trainer'), and operators should dig into a trainer's experience before engaging them. You may only end up paying for poor skills explained badly, which will leave your team far from enthused about great coffee."

"I hope the new SCAE qualifications will provide a good guide. Holding the

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professional qualification will be an indicator that the skills are there."

At Espresso Service, Louie Salvoni agreed that the attitude of hospitality management is a problem.

"Trainers can only work with what they are given... and what they can be given is disinterested, demotivated staff, with run-of-the-mill coffee, and a poorly-maintained machine. And the trainer will know that those he is training today may be gone next month."

"We need to focus on the business owner. Interest has to come from top management, or the bottom falls apart – what can the trainer do, if the business owner does not have any enthusiasm for coffee?"

The noted trainer Robert Henry, of Another Cup and the London School of Coffee, supported this.

"I don't think bad coffee is solely down to the trainers. Coffee is seen as something to be prepared 'back of house' in lots of hotels – in restaurants, it mainly signals the end of a meal, and the chance to clear a table!"

"A chef will personally pick cuts of meat or fillets of fish, and sommeliers know their wine. Can a typical catering manager say if his coffee is 100-per-cent Arabica? Whose fault is this? If operational directors don't place a value on coffee, the best trainer in the world will get nowhere with their staff."

At the same time, he added, some of our trade attitudes do not help.

"Most independent coffee shops are started by people who love coffee. Hotel owners have different priorities... and their coffee suppliers don't want to rock the boat and potentially lose the contract."

"So, poor coffee quality can also be down to the seller."

Does this mean the sellers hold a responsibility to press for more respect to be given to beverages?

"Roasters need to ensure that customers know the quality of their coffee is very high. Machine suppliers need to teach customers that equipment is something that's capable of increasing revenue and sales. They should be making it clear that machines and beans absolutely 'must' be handled and used in a certain way in order to maintain quality and maximise sales."

"If we can turn this corner, we'll see quality improve."

That's a difficult one for suppliers, replied Marco Olmi of Drury, who is both roaster and a machine supplier.

"Mike Haggerton has a point in that standards do need to rise. However, blaming the training by suppliers might be unfair."

"A free training session by a machine supplier may appear to be 'too basic' – but when you've been on the receiving end of a client who has been deliberately pitching suppliers against each other to try and get you to drop your price by a thousand pounds, can he then expect to get a free six-hour training session? I don't think so!"

**“It would be hard, if not impossible, to force caterers to undertake any kind of training... that said, if we look at our own trade customers and rank them by the amount of training we give them, in relation to the volume of coffee they sell... there is a really obvious and positive correlation between the two.”**

- Jonathan Wadham, Rombouts

"If you commit to our coffee, you can have free training forever, as often as you like, and to a very high standard – but even then, the catering trade has strange ideas about training."

"I have said to employers: 'send your staff here, and I'll give them a free full day's training', and in return I have actually had a customer say: 'I've got eleven staff, and they're not getting a day off to come to you – you can come here, and you can have half an hour'. I said that would probably be enough to teach them to switch on the machine!"

"This is a two-way street – caterers also have to put in some work on this."

At Rombouts, training manager Jonathan Wadham wondered how much the low standard of coffee served in the wider hospitality trade, and the resulting low expectations of consumers, simply perpetuates the poor standard of out-of-home coffee.

"I totally agree with Mike Haggerton. The truth is that a lot of consumers are happy to drink poor coffee, simply because they haven't tasted great, well-made coffee. And if they are happy with what they are served, there is little to encourage the general hospitality trade to improve."

"The last big change in coffee expectations came from the rise of Starbucks, Costa and Caffè Nero, who shifted consumer expectations towards cappuccinos and lattes. Many in the hospitality trade are still trying to move to this level of quality, let alone the next. It will not be until great coffee is more widely available that there will be a demand from consumers en masse, which will require the hospitality trade to change."

"There are those who simply want to take coffee with no support or training, and it would be hard, if not impossible, to force them to undertake any kind of regular training."

"And that said, if we look at our own trade customers and rank them by the amount of training we give them, in relation to the volume of coffee they sell... there is a really obvious and positive correlation between the two."

A general opinion from our readers is that the standard which the hospitality trade needs to reach is not geek-level speciality coffee. As one marketing director observed, this industry exists on a lot of good and acceptable coffee, being served fast.

It is in the big middle-ground of hotels and restaurants, say many players, where the need is for the average standard of coffee to grow to

His training involves a weekly 'barista knowledge' check, and a basic six months' training leads to the senior barista programme, which finishes with an 'exam-like' presentation to the management team. This leads to promotion and higher wages.

Does it help the business?

"It helps the staff to show that being a barista can be a viable and rewarding career option. When we overhear our baristas chatting to customers about the different aspects of a coffee, we know we've achieved a goal for our business."

The Giraffe chain has just opened a training restaurant, the G1 in Hampstead. This is said to be 'a place for the next generation of chefs, servers and managers'.

How about their baristas, we asked?

Coffee is a part of it, replied founder Russel Joffe, who used to do the barista training himself, but now relies on senior staff ('coffee ambassadors') who are required to teach an understanding of beans and machines, not just the 'how to do it'.

Their enthusiasm affects the result, Joffe told us. "Enthusiasm rubs off on trainees, and that has, no doubt, raised the standards throughout our group."

"We also have a relationship with our roaster – we now regularly take our 'coffee ambassadors' to their roastery to keep them up to date."

It is clear that imaginative training in the coffee trade has results, in taste and in profits. Can this be carried over

*continues over...*

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*Continued from previous page...*

to the wider hospitality trades?

"I fully endorse the comments regarding the disappointing standard of espresso," said David Veal, executive director of the Speciality Coffee Association of Europe.

"Help is at hand – the BSA's awards and VRQ barista training have made a difference, and at the SCAE, the barista championships still push the boundaries back, and our Coffee Diploma System delivers excellent barista training and recognised certificates which employers can use to help recruit good baristas."

So, if it is desirable to improve appreciation of the need for coffee training and quality in the mainstream hospitality trade... what's the next move, and who's going to do it?

How can the coffee trade deliver a general message concerning the link between better coffee and profit? And who's going to pay for it?

"Great question!" returned David Veal at the SCAE. "Our industry is so fragmented, multi-layered and international that there has never been a unified voice.

"However this is a subject very close to my heart – you won't be surprised to hear me say that the SCAE do have some initiatives planned in this area."

The same came from the BSA.

"The short answer to this question is – it cannot!" agreed Ranald Paterson at the BSA. "Hot drinks are seen as a minor revenue and profit earner to food or alcohol in hospitality and mass catering. Catering colleges do not treat the industry seriously, and I can see no concerted moves within the coffee, tea and chocolate multi-nationals to combat bad drinks."

"The BSA took a bold decision years ago to highlight the need to raise standards, but we are not set up to 'fund' change... we are 'performing' change, but there is a long way to go."

A unified message from the industry is unlikely, stated Louie Salvoni at Espresso Service flatly.

"But we do all have a responsibility to get the message across, and for me, the onus falls first on the coffee roaster. The coffee provider has the incentive – the better the quality served, the more coffee will be sold."

"So I would challenge the coffee crew to start this. If your coffee really is the best thing that has ever been, then start showing the operators how to produce it best to maximise the quality and increase sales."

For the big roasters and brands to start investing in publicising this clearly will be a good start, said Salvoni, but it won't be the whole answer.

"This is not a one-off fix. This needs to be continual... there are many years ahead in the battle for consistently good coffee."

One of the big items in the BSA's annual awards is the 'best drinks' category... and this year's prize-winners were notable for the unusual features of their drinks.

Typically, the unusual aspect of the 'best tea' prize is that it was won by someone more noted for his coffee – Steve Dyson of Spring Espresso, in York. He won with an oolong supplied by the Canton tea company.

"All our Chinese teas come from Canton and are served in a Piao tea pot on a wooden tray with a modern Chinese tea cup without handle and extra water," he told us. "The extra water is given because although Chinese teas appear expensive, £3 in our shop, you can get many infusions."

(The Piao is something which looks similar to a cafetiere, but has an upper steeping chamber which allows brewed tea to pass into a lower serving chamber; a push-button arrangement allows the user to stop the steeping at their preferred point).

A curiosity of modern tea service, observes Steve, is that many customers are extremely vague about what they want from oriental teas.

"We have an increasing number of customers asking for 'green tea'. What they often mean is Chinese-style teas, as they have heard about the health properties of these teas. So, if they just say 'green tea', we try to suggest other Chinese teas they might like, and we always have a good selection.

"If they want a suggestion I always say Mi Lan Dan Cong oolong. An oolong is basically a tea leaf that has had the edges bruised by rolling and tumbling to cause oxidisation.

"Most Chinese teas give 8-10 infusions, but this is 12-20 without losing flavour – and as the water cools from the 90C degree we serve it at, the flavours change and develop... many customers say they get peach flavours or honey. It always opens up a conversation about other teas."

Chinese ingredients also cropped up in the 'best cappuccino' prize, which went to Pumphrey's of Newcastle, who very unusually made theirs with a single-origin Simao Humin coffee from China. It happened to be their 'coffee of the month', and comes from the Yunnan region, which is of course famous for its tea.

"This is our very first from China in our 263-year history," the company's Stuart Lee Archer told us. "It worked incredibly well with milk, creating a really buttery texture. Our Whitmee open-flame roaster did a great job of translating the positive flavours – there were some negative flavours around too, but they completely melted away with the milk of our cappuccino."

"We serve 5.5oz cappuccinos and Joey Murphy, our head barista, did a fantastic job in explaining the flavours

## Unusual ingredients take the BSA prizes

This year's BSA awards for 'best drinks' in British cafes turned up some extremely unusual brews



Winners with Chinese teas and coffee  
- Steve Dyson (above) and the Pumphreys team with Dame Kelly Holmes, who presented the awards



to the 'secret shopper' judge! We deliberately buy coffees that are different, and out of our comfort zone, in an attempt to keep everyone on their toes. This has been our most successful 'coffee of the month' to date."

There were several entertaining aspects to the other 'best drink' prizes. Quite typically, Ian Steel of the Atkinsons roaster in Lancaster, whose onsite café won the best flat white, told us of his company's irreverent attitude to brewing the drink:

"To be perfectly honest we read the rule book some while ago, but have pretty much torn it up and written our own. So, our flat white is actually the same as our cappuccino, and on our menu it just says cappuccino! It's in a seven-ounce Ancap cup with a double shot and steamed milk with latte art. The espresso uses a 20gm dose, yielding 35gm brew weight, pulled manually on a vintage lever machine, a 1959 Faema President."

"It's a double shot in all drinks - if they want a weaker one they can have a late in an 8.75oz cup."

The 'best filter coffee' prize went to the Bottle Kiln of Derbyshire, whose Becky Stone generously redirected any praise to roaster Peter James of Hay on Wye.

"He sources and roasts some beautiful coffees. This coffee was a Kenyan from Kirimahiga, which is both a wet mill and a co-operative society, transparent in ecological and ethical practices. The taste profile is juicy grapefruit enveloping soft blackcurrant."

"Our method of serving is a single cup filter, which I feel gives us a quick, clean, sediment-free extraction, and some great flavours. We started with ceramic and moved to

plastic as they retained the heat a lot better, and we place straight onto the cup instead of using a stand as this also brings in an element of heat loss. Drinking a cooler filter coffee can give a much more interesting profile, but on a commercial basis heat, unfortunately, is the big factor.

"The exact process that we go through to create a one cup is: pre-wet the filter and cup, freshly grind into the filter, then add a small amount of water to just cover the grind and leave to bloom - this makes a massive difference to the end result.

"Then slowly pour over the remaining water in a circular motion to get some movement, while being careful not to over-fill the filter and get coffee grinds in the cup.

Then - serve with a smile!"

The 'best latte' was won by Oakley Wheelwright from the Crema in Bridlington. What, we asked him, makes a good latte, which is probably the most uncomplicated espresso-and-milk drink... and possibly the one most casually made in many outlets?

"This is slightly hard to answer," he replied. "There are definitely several factors which can ruin one!"

"For a good one, first and most important I'd prioritise a great espresso, then milk steamed to exactly the right consistency and temperature (nothing above 55c for latte) and the third factor is how you combine the milk with espresso.

"Ours is an 8oz latte, and the espresso at the time of judging was a single origin Kenya Gichathiani from Origin Coffee, and the milk was a local dairy's full-fat offering."



One of the most entertaining aspects of the BSA awards was the report by the Heswall News on the Wirral, which went a fraction over the top in reporting the success of the local Avanti cafe.

"A Wirral cafe gave rivals a roasting after being crowned brewers of Britain's best coffee," announced the paper, "Avanti in Heswall beat 200 competitors to win the BSA's top national award for the quality of coffee and hot chocolate."

Strictly speaking, just a slight exaggeration there – Avanti was one of 35 venues to achieve the four-cup rating, and that's the second tier of the BSA's cafe awards. Even so, as the BSA happily agreed, the more the British local press take any interest in these things, the better for the coffee trade in general. We need more of this!

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The gluten-free market appears to continue upwards - the Coeliac UK organisation has now said that business through the catering sector is worth £100 million a year, and now the Handmade Cake Company has invested in a bakery within a bakery', which is its isolated sub-bakery dedicated to producing gluten-free products.

This, says director Simon Law, is the brand's most definite commitment to what it believes will be a growing market, even though he did not at first think so.

"We did stay away from this for years, until it became apparent that it really is a big opportunity. Now we say this whole thing is going to get big, no question... this is real. There are people who cannot eat food with gluten, and who therefore do not buy cakes at all."

"This is not a fad. It will become another standard business option."

The Handmade Cake Company is now so convinced of this that it has put £80,000 into a dedicated gluten-free manufacturing area within its main bakery.

"When you think of gluten-free products, you have two options," explains Simon Law. "You can separate food by time, which is to bake your gluten-free products at the weekend or on specific days, or by space. Separating by time is difficult and leaves you open to problems, and can be disruptive.

"We thought that to do it properly, we had to have a separate physical

## The gluten-free market really is going up...



The Handmade Cake Company says this market sector is now a serious one - and has even opened a dedicated new sub-bakery

space. We have spare space equivalent to two or three large offices, and decided to create a separate bakery inside an existing bakery, and now we have dedicated ovens, bakeware, trolleys and storage, all only for use with gluten-free products.

"The area is off limits to staff wearing the wrong colour of hairnet, and in the official language, we are 'properly segregated'. Coeliac UK have been in, tested the 'parts per million' of gluten in the air, and are satisfied - we can now be registered with them and use their logo."

Is this really worth while? If it is worth while for a baker, is it meaningful for a café owner?

"It all comes down to whether or not you think gluten-free food is going to be a significant part of your business. As a baker, if you think not, then bake

it at the weekend as a sideline. If you think there is business in this every day, then it makes sense to consider a separate bakery area. The new area is not working to capacity yet, and is probably only up three days a week - but it certainly allows us to produce a heck of a lot more than we could before.

"All the reports now say that it is not just a couple of hundred thousand coeliacs who are buying gluten-free food - there is a vast number who consider it better for their health. That few hundred thousand is now several million and growing."

How about the quality difference?

"As the amount of demand for gluten-free rises, so does the quality. At one point it was rubbish - now, the gap between gluten-free food and 'normal' food disappears. The parallel is with vegetarian food, which is now so good that it is eaten by non-vegetarians.

"The difference in taste will not disappear completely, because you are using different flours, which work in different ways, and give a slightly different taste. But you would still want to eat it!

"The perception of this quality gap is important, because it is the question of producing a product which is good enough to be eaten by everyone, not just a limited specialism. There are different approaches to this - Costa makes very little comment about its

gluten-free brownies, because they don't want to put 'normal' buyers off."

There is however a practical question for café operators.

"The debate now is - where is the greatest danger of segregation? The probability is that it is in cafes who do not think about the subject. Use the wrong tongs, and you've ruined it."

"So the big contract caterers are not taking the risk - they're going for separately wrapped products. Our products are individually wrapped."

The Handmade Cake Company has always had a certain reputation for new product ideas - gluten-free cakes aside, what is new?

"Novelties in general are still an interesting subject - whoopies came and went, but cupcakes are still 'of the moment'. That's turned out to be a fad with legs, continuing to grow. I think cronuts and duffins will fade away, because the consumer is not prepared to take a risk and pay a lot for something without knowing exactly what it is.

"However, having 'something interesting' is always a good idea. Something that makes the customer think: 'oh, look...'"

For the Handmade company, the new example of that turns out to be something unpredicted.

"We shall have a zucchini and lime next year - which, for us, is pretty edgy."

"It came from a 'vegetable baking day', which was an experiment. We know beetroot is good for keeping things moist, and courgettes do the same. Forty years ago, of course, people thought carrot cake was a bit odd.

"The sprout cake, by contrast, was not so nice..."

Coeliac UK, the campaigning organisation behind gluten-free products, says that the trade should take an interest in the new Freefrom Eating Out Awards. The organisation will soon name the winner of its Gluten-free Chef of the Year competition.

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A vacant hotel building in Silloth, Cumbria, is to become a café themed for Kathleen Ferrier, the contralto singer who was famous in the 1950s for songs such as *Blow the Wind Southerly* - when she died, a magazine said that she was 'probably the most celebrated woman in Britain after the Queen'. The new Mrs Wilson's is being opened by Kath Hopcroft, god-daughter of the singer, and will be decorated as it would have been at the time.

It is unlikely to appear in British tea-rooms, but a curious development of the Japanese tea ceremony is a new kind of tatami mat. A tea room in Yokohama has now produced a floor mat lit up by LED technology to produce an 'eerie yet peaceful glow'. The Hikari Tatami ('light-up straw flooring') involves several colour variants, and the mats are hand-crafted using local Japanese rush grass, which gives the traditional fragrance of straw mat floors. One single mat costs just under a thousand pounds.

A small café in Germany has won a trademark victory over the computer giant Apple. The café's logo shows the outline of a child's face inside a red apple, illustrating that it is a child-friendly venue. The computer giant spent two years claiming that customers could confuse the two businesses - but it has now withdrawn its objection. The case is all the more remarkable in that Apple has previously won cases against the Beatles and, almost unbelievably, against the city of New York for daring to illustrate the traditional phrase 'the big apple'!

For a trade which enjoys its contests so much, this has been a fine autumn for imaginative competitions.

An entirely new idea was devised by Mercanta, the green-bean importer – it challenged six small artisan roasters to produce the tastiest result from one of its coffees.

"The contestants were each given two kilos of our Rwanda Red Bourbon, and used our Probat electric sample roaster," we were told by Mercanta's Stephen Cornford. "The winner was decided by a blind tasting, followed by voting of everyone there on the day, including Mercanta staff."

The winner's prize was their name engraved on a 'coffee thief' (the brass instrument used for drawing and pouring coffee bean samples) and the remainder of the sack of coffee used in the competition!

The winner was Sam Langdon of Caravan, whose Tane Welton came third; second was Phil Gevaux of Origin. Other contestants were from Small Batch, Round Hill, and Extract.

The Cornish beach café which inspired the region's recent imaginative barista contest has been recognised for its environmental credentials – the Gelly Beach cafe in Falmouth is one of 61 British finalists, from a total of 2,400 contenders, shortlisted for the Goldstar Award from Green Tourism for commitment to sustainability.



Kirsty Spear's 'pink coffee'

Lucy Gregory of the Gelly Beach was the organiser of the Master of The Brew contest, which spread across several weeks and involved various different challenges held at various local cafes. The local Espressini took both first place (to Angel Parushev) and 2nd place (Hannah Giles). "This also places Hannah as top female barista in the south west," Espressini's owner Rupert Ellis told us. Entrants paid a £5 fee and spectators were asked for a donation, with all proceeds going to local charity.

In the next county, there was a challenging aspect to the competition held by the Havana coffee company of Barnstaple. In a similar way to the one run by Caffe Society in Yorkshire a few years ago, this was a contest for the everyday working barista, not for those with ambitions to be elite coffee snobs.

"We want to do our bit to draw attention to good coffee in North Devon," explained Havana's owner Nigel

## Pink coffee and dry ice in autumn barista contests



*These are not steaming hot coffees – it's the dry ice which is puzzling the judges at the Boston Tea Party contest!*

Mackenzie-Shapland. "Many of the barista championships, though great as a showpiece, have forgotten about the everyday caterer and left them behind.

"This was an attempt to involve all those on a tier below the elite, who love making coffee just as much and who want to have a bit of fun and meet others in a similar situation.

"It was a great inaugural event, and we were really pleased with the support received and the standard of entries. We are already looking at ways of developing the event for next year!

Ryan Brodie of Camper Coffee, a mobile coffee unit from Crediton, was the winner; he said he thought his signature drink Saffy Darling swung the judges in his favour. This was a mocha mixed with saffron and cardamom.

The two runners-up were Mollie Sargent of the Great British Tea Shop in Ilfracombe and Kirsty Spear of RHS Garden Rosemoor, whose signature drinks were unusual – Kirsty's was a Turkish Delight, a 'pink coffee' which was created by using rose water and beetroot, and Mollie's featured peanut butter and chocolate.

Winners received barista kits and engraved tampers – the local paper actually said 'engraved grinders', which rather surprised Havana, who had not intended to be quite so generous. Havana is also sponsoring a 'best café' contest in a local food magazine.

(The contest was held at the Big Sheep – that's a very long-established visitor attraction in the west country!)

Again in the south-west, the chain Boston Tea Party has held its second in-house barista contest.

The Extract roaster in Bristol hosted the event, and the winner was Aga

The reporting of one recent worldwide barista contest has thrown up some odd items.

In Costa's in-house world barista championship finals in London, one judge was celebrity chef Phil Vickery, who was later quoted by the Costa media staff as saying: "I now know what goes into a decent cup of coffee..." We have attempted to ask the chef why he did not know this before, but have failed to achieve a response!

Costa's reaction to its own winners might seem a little unimaginative, to judge by reports in the general press.

Costa's world title was won by Tony Huang of Guangzhou Grand View Mall, of whom the head judge is reported to have said: "Tony did a fantastic job against some outstanding competition. He's just what we look for in our baristas: someone who possesses true Pride, Passion and Personality about their coffee."

Second placed was Szilard Hathazi of the Isle of Man sea terminal branch. In the area's local paper, the head judge said: "Szilard did a fantastic job against some outstanding competition. He's just what we look for in our baristas: someone who possesses true Pride, Passion and Personality about their coffee."

In third place was Tatum Clews of Bridgwater, whose local paper reported the head judge saying: "Tatum did a fantastic job against some outstanding competition. She's just what we look for in our baristas..." Ah, you've guessed the rest of it?

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## Are there undiscovered duffin colonies?



Readers may recall our stories of curious hybrid cakes appearing in cafes – reporting the 'cronut' last month, we added that Starbucks had introduced the 'duffin', in what the chain called an attempt to be continually innovative with artisan products.

Well, the item above is a 'duffin', but not by Starbucks – it's by Bea's of Bloomsbury, which has turned up in the national press, reportedly accusing Starbucks of stealing the idea of a muffin/doughnut hybrid, and claiming to have published the recipe in a book three years ago.

Starbucks reportedly responded that they had trademarked the name – but they later changed their attitude, claiming in apparent innocence: 'since launching the Starbucks duffin... we have discovered there are other duffins out there.'

Costa has called in ghosthunters to its café in Worcester, which is in a 15th century timbered building. Staff say that cups have flown off shelves and smashed in mid-air, mysterious shadows have appeared, footsteps have been heard, and both staff and customers believe they have seen the images of a woman and child. A historian says that the building previously had a reputation for being haunted, and was involved in the story of a double agent in the civil war. A medium who visited the café said: "There is a lot of spirit activity in the store – I feel a sense of running water, as well as the spirit of a woman with her child who have immense feelings of grief and bereavement." Although the story has made a YouTube video, the credibility of it may have been lessened by Costa having released it at Hallowe'en.



The local press in Windsor got rather excited about Caffe Nero opening a 'flagship' site in a former Millets store there. Why a 'flagship' site, we asked – will it be the Queen's local coffee house? Caffe Nero replied, with just a touch of cynicism: "generally the definition of a flagship store is one which is too large and loses money. Hopefully that will not be the case..."

The MP Anne Widdecombe, now equally famous as a Strictly dancer, caused a familiar problem for a café owner when she dropped in to Poppy's tea room in St Neots – what do you do when a VIP walks in, and all your seats are occupied? Owner Alison Gardner told her local paper: "we were packed out, really busy when she turned up. I recognised her, we started talking and I was thinking 'there's nowhere for her to sit!'. The café boss did the only possible thing – kept the VIP actively chatting at the counter until another customer happened to leave.



Britloos, the association behind the Loo of the Year awards, has advised that in order to meet the conditions for joining the single European currency, the phrase 'spending a penny' is to be banned from the end of this year. From this date, they say, the correct terminology will have to be: 'Euronating'.



The owners of the Temporary Measure tea room in Keswick have received some unexpected national publicity. The public-review website TripAdvisor, which has often been criticised by caterers over both the



## Kaldi

fairness and even the legitimacy of its reviews, featured a customer's comment saying the owners and staff are grumpy – and they agreed. With remarkable good humour, John and Emma replied that they aren't 'grumpy', they're 'northern', with a manner that sometimes surprises visitors from elsewhere. The story was quickly repeated among the press; playing along well, the owners told the media: "the north retains a good old-fashioned respect for a surly disposition – we may not always deliver service with a smile, but we will make you a great cup of coffee." A little research suggests that the complaint may not have been entirely typical of their customers' experiences – TripAdvisor is currently showing a 91 per cent 'excellent' rating for the café.

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