

Boughton's

COFFEE HOUSE



Scoop Malone, the coffee trade's ace reporter, once again brings you the best read in the entire beverage trade...by miles!

August/September 2014

Pubs double coffee sales by moving to quality

There has been a remarkable amount of activity in the pub trade, as its move towards quality coffee continues. The St Austell brewery has reported a quite vast increase in coffee business in the six months since it launched its own coffee brand, and the massive Heineken empire has taken up a 'groundbreaking' idea from Kimbo Coffee, which in many cases gives pub managers equipment and coffee on trust, with no conditions... and which also suggests there has been past 'mis-selling' to the pub trade by coffee suppliers.

At St Austell, some pubs have doubled their coffee sales since the Brewer and Bean range came in. This is a Miko coffee, and has been taken on by 22 pubs in the brewery's estate.

The first three inns to test the concept six months ago remain among the estate's top performers for hot beverages, which the brewery says proves that 'the pub coffee shop' model is a successful and profitable approach which reflects the way the pub market is changing, and which is now worth further investment.

Kimbo's deal with the Star pub group, the leased-business section of the Heineken empire, comes with the suggestion that it is correcting a situation which might be considered to be 'mis-selling' in the beverage trade, and 'changes the dynamic of coffee supply to the licensed sector'.

Kimbo will supply Star lessees with coffee, machines and training on a 'trust' basis. There are no written contracts which commit the clients to any coffee volumes, or to periods of usage, or which include any termination penalties. Kimbo has said that if Heineken trusts lessees enough to let them run a pub, then Kimbo will trust them and help them build a coffee trade.

"The breweries' experience of coffee companies is that many suppliers are putting in the wrong equipment, on long leases that don't make any sense," Kimbo's managing director Angus McKenzie told us. "They have been selling in coffee on the premise of 'only 20p a cup', but have added onerous conditions in the red tape and small print.

"We have realised we could shake the whole thing up, with three 'packages': for those thinking they'll sell ten coffees a day, we put in a small capsule machine and frother, and at the top end we'll invest in the installation of a decent espresso machine and grinder, for the minimum order of ten kilos a month.

"It is the middle ground of twenty-plus coffees a day where the big problem lies. Here, the laws of chemistry are against the publican in the way the coffee industry attempts to sell them coffee – no, you cannot leave a kilo of coffee in the hopper for a week until it's finished, and expect to produce great coffee!

"For this segment, we are investing in the installation of a capsule machine, with no conditions. In all cases, if the idea doesn't work out, they can just give the equipment back, with no penalty."

Of the thousand-strong Star pub estate, 113 have taken up the offer and 260 have expressed interest. Is Kimbo simply putting a lot of machines out into the field on faith?

"Some coffee companies may think it foolish, but we think it is a creative and helpful solution. We are putting machines into places where they may have never served coffee before. The

attitude of some coffee companies to this is unbelievable – they say 'no point in putting any effort into that pub, they don't sell coffee'... well, of course they don't, if you don't put any effort behind them!"



Elsewhere, several old pub premises have recently been converted to coffee shops, part of a trend which the Campaign for Real Ale believes should be prevented by law.

Camra says that on average, 31 pubs have closed every week this year, and that laws should be introduced to make it harder for pubs to be demolished or converted into other businesses, and that is 'utterly perverse' that developers are allowed to convert a pub into a convenience store or coffee shop without any requirement to apply for change-of-use permission.



A sign of the times, indeed... this is the latest of the long series of commentary on A-boards from Street Coffee of London – and in answer to our question, they say: "there are now eleven coffee shops within a five-minute walk of our Brick Lane shop - when we started there were none."

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Yes, this really is the interior of a Costa cafe. It is a completely new style of interior design for Costa which has been proposed for a cafe which will be opened in a landmark building from the war. Some time ago, Costa applied for permission to open in an airfield control tower at Kings Hill, Sevenoaks, which used to be the West Malling RAF base. The designers, Architecture Design Limited, have said: "we've spent a long time designing this – it's completely different and nothing about our design is standard Costa specification."

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Costa has opened in Oban, on the west coast of Scotland, despite strong opposition from independent coffee shops in the town. Permission for change of use (from a whisky shop!) was granted over 25 letters of objection, all complaining that the chain's arrival would have an adverse effect on independent coffee shops in the town. The council said this was not a material planning consideration.

The Artigiano espresso bar, which has sites in central London and Exeter, is expected to open in Reading - it is reported that the company is also advertising for a head barista, baristas and managers for Bath. Also in Reading, the franchisee of the new Creams Cafe reports having received 300 CVs in application for the twenty jobs open.

The Cardiff-based brewer Brain's has opened a Coffee#1 cafe in Newton Abbot. The site is a former furniture store which now, entertainingly, becomes a café featuring mismatched chairs and tables. Old tiles found on the walls during the refurbishment have been incorporated into the design. There are now over forty Coffee#1 sites.

The owners of the Coffee House in Bury St Edmunds have opened a second café, taking over the former High Street Cafe in Ixworth. The partners commented that "we knew from the beginning that we wanted to have about three coffee houses, so we're right on track."

An American newspaper has

reported the long-life secret of a lady who celebrated her 100th birthday - all her life she has risen at 2am, brewed and drunk a pot of coffee, then gone back to bed.

The charity New Life Aberdeen has been given change-of-use permission to create a coffee shop which will function as a social enterprise business to help the long-term unemployed back into work. An objection had been raised by a neighbouring bakery business which itself employs 22 apprentices with learning difficulties.

A new slant on the old question of pavement tables and chairs has been devised by the tea-room operator at Dingwall railway station in Scotland. The operator, Tina Swanson, is an extremely active fundraiser for the local branch of Marie Curie Cancer Care, and has begun a series of Blooming Great Tea Parties. In good weather, she now takes the tables and chairs on to the platform!

Peter Andre's New York Coffee Club has now developed into a mobile service - the brand's mobile truck has made its first appearance at music festivals, and will be touring more during the rest of the summer.

Watford Community Housing Trust is running an eight-week trial with a Piaggio coffee van outside its offices. Profits will be re-invested back into a community café that is planned within the trust offices.

Kenco - a new kind of coffee ad

There has been a discussion in the advertising and promotional media (yes, it does exist, mainly to talk about each other's 'creative' work!) over the very curious new television commercial by Kenco.

This is quite reasonably described as a big departure from previous commercials for coffee - the taste of the product is not mentioned, and the usual string of satisfied-looking suave coffee drinkers has been avoided.

Instead, a young man on a bike is shown cycling through the slums of Honduras (apparently the real thing) and faced by tattooed young thugs (apparently also the real thing) before getting on a bus and travelling to what turns out to be a coffee farm, where he appears to be starting a new life as a farm lad.

In the pro-Kenco side of the ad industry, this has been described as 'hard-hitting', with a 'gritty visual style'. On the other hand, some ad critics have asked what it's all about - because the commercial does not actually say, until it gets almost to the end before there is one brief spoken reference made to what it is all about.

It turns out that Kenco is part of a multi-million-euro programme to 'make coffee farming a sustainable, productive and respected profession... we plan to do so by helping one million coffee smallholder farmers become successful entrepreneurs by 2020'. Part of this is the *Coffee v Gangs* project in Honduras, which



Kenco's graffiti artist

seeks to train a group of vulnerable young people in the coffee trade, by getting them off the street, away from the lure of the gang existence, and into a constructive life.

It appears to be a very creditable project - but Kenco has yet to widely explain it. As one critic has written: "I wonder what exactly we're helping with here... how are we helping by buying this brand of coffee? Can't wait for *Coffee v Gangs* to go live and explain it."

Kenco has not yet responded to requests from us... but we are inclined to think that this ad is going to be the first of a series.

Some graffiti which is part of the project is done by an architect-turned-street artist whose vision is to spread community messages through his wall art.

Creatives complain about cafe opening times

There has apparently been an uprising of intellectuals in Hampstead over a proposed change in opening hours at a local coffee house. This is the Brewhouse in Kenwood House, which is a local stately home on Hampstead Heath, where English Heritage has changed caterer and published a new and later opening time of 10am. The result was, according to several local papers, little short of a cultural revolution - a historian who writes all her books in the café said: "everyone is outraged, there's a whole cluster of us who use it early, and it would be devastating for us creatives." The economics correspondent for a major Sunday paper complained that he too does all his writing there, and even the great jazz guitarist John Etheridge complained. It is reported that the novelist John le Carre does a lot of writing there (but has apparently not commented). English Heritage hastily said that it had no plans for changing its hours.

A rather new cafe menu idea is said to be drawing attention from foodies in America - it is the concept of tea and cheese pairing, devised by the Attic coffee-house in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Bill and Julie Macier, whose business is a combination of coffee shop and bookshop, have said that the two items work together very much like wine and cheese pairings - "a general rule of thumb is that a cheese that you like with a red wine, is a cheese that would pair fairly well with a black tea. A cheese that pairs well with a white wine would have the same properties that would pair with a green tea."



The Attic has put together a menu of tea and cheese pairings. They include Assam tea with Old Amsterdam aged Gouda, Earl Grey with Wisconsin Black Band, a local sharp white cheddar, and jasmine green tea with creamy Italian cheese. They also suggest that Darjeeling goes with Danish Cream Havarti, which is a creamy, buttery, and semi-firm cheese.

Christmas blends have begun to appear - Taylors of Harrogate is among the first to come out, with a Rainforest Alliance African/South American blend, which is said to be more citrus than the floral notes of the blend it offered last year. Perhaps rather more interesting are the brand's two seasonal teas. The spiced Christmas tea features lemon, orange and spices, and the Spiced Apple features star anise, ginger root, cardamom and cinnamon with apple pieces. Drury has also come out with its seasonal blends, as has Cherizena.

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Compatible capsule world enters odd court cases and technologies

The worldwide enthusiasm for coffee roasters to leap on to the capsule market has resulted in an extremely odd court case in America. A group of consumers have banded together to raise a 'class action' law suit alleging that they were conned into buying substandard compatible capsules made to fit Keurig K-cup machines, which are the big format in the US.

It is alleged that a food company attempted to sell Keurig-compatible capsules before the patent expired, and to avoid a lawsuit for copying the original, adapted the design by removing the filter... and to make it work, they used instant coffee mixed with some fresh grounds.

Consumers sued, claiming that they had been led to believe that the capsules contained real ground coffee. The defending company claimed that its packaging clearly showed soluble ingredients to be involved, and a court threw the case out.

An appeals court has now said that the case must be reinstated, making the interesting comment that while public response showed the copy product to have been 'awful', the lower court failed to consider whether a copy of an established reputable product would in itself suggest to a reasonable consumer the standard of

quality to be expected from the compatible product. This, it has been observed, could be an internationally-relevant test case.

Meanwhile, it is reported that the same big capsule brand in America has used Digital Rights Management in an attempt to prevent compatible capsules being used in its machines. DRM is the so-called 'digital lock' technology which, among other things, can make it impossible to copy a DVD.

In this case, the DRM recognised the brand's own capsules, and prevented a machine from using compatibles. Within weeks, compatible brands said they had cracked the DRM, and their capsules would now work in the machines.

One cheekily commented that: "the consumers will be the ultimate winners by being able to choose the best tasting coffees available."

Vaping and coffee - the next big opportunity?

The owner of a growing 'vaping café' chain has spoken of 'a clear market opportunity for independent operators to seize the growing market of vaping by combining it with coffee'.

Vaping, or e-cigarettes, are said to be the fastest-moving consumer trend of the moment. They are battery-operated devices which allow for the inhaling of steamed and often flavoured nicotine 'juice'; they contain nicotine, but not tobacco. There are said to be 466 brands and more than 7,700 flavours on the worldwide market, with an average of ten new brands entering the market every month for the last two years, and a market value of ten billion dollars expected soon.

The local press in Bedford reports that Claire Riddington-Smith, owner of Vaperz, is launching her second vaping café, after finding success with her first in London. She has also invented a solar-powered vaping device.

The local paper quotes her making the interesting remarks that vaping is still a niche market, but that her new invention can quickly become a world-

wide brand, with particular opportunity at festivals 'where the great outdoors allows for vaping at will'.

Most notably, however, we learn that she has been helped by Kevin Kavanagh, who runs the local Frescoes coffee house, and that she is proposing vaping-café franchises. This, she says, is the big opportunity - two revenue streams in one business.

Meanwhile, this month, the American Heart Association called for regulation to be put into place quickly to avoid the odd possibility of electronic cigarettes serving as a route for young people to become addicted to nicotine, and possibly even creating a new generation of tobacco-smokers.

The association alleged that the proliferation of flavours in e-cigarettes was clearly intended to attract the younger generation.

Tapioca tea cafes bubble on

It is suggested that the bubble tea phenomenon is likely to progress even further - Assad Khan, who opened the UK's first shop in Soho three years ago and now has several other outlets and instore concessions in London, is to open in American shopping malls, and has spoken of his ambition to become the sector's biggest player. He has already grown to a reported turnover of £2 million, and has 44 outlets in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Russia, Switzerland and Kuwait. He told the financial press: "it is drunk all over the world, but there is no global leader. Where is the Starbucks of bubble tea?"

Elsewhere, the Chatime bubble-tea chain has opened its fifth site, in Notting Hill, West London. The chain claims to serve authentic Taiwanese bubble tea, with a selection of hot and cold teas and a menu of 63 flavours. It has three other London sites and one in Nottingham.

A combined coffee bar and wine bar with late-night opening is to appear in Norwich - Aroma will have its bottom floor given over to coffee, the middle floor to a seating area, and the top as the wine bar. The owners already run the Locomotion coffee bar at the Garage arts centre. The partners said that the idea was born from the frustration of waiting to be served on a weekend or having to fight through crowds to reach the bar - there will be table service until midnight on Friday and Saturday.

Cambridge University has actually advertised for applicants who want to take up a doctorship course in... chocolate. The university's department of chemical engineering and bio-technology is looking for a researcher for a three-year project which will investigate ways in which chocolate can remain solid and retain qualities in warm climates. The serious aspect of this, it seems, is that chocolate has heat-sensitive tendencies which are close to that of the human body. Applicants need more than a sweet tooth to apply - they need a degree in science at the very least.

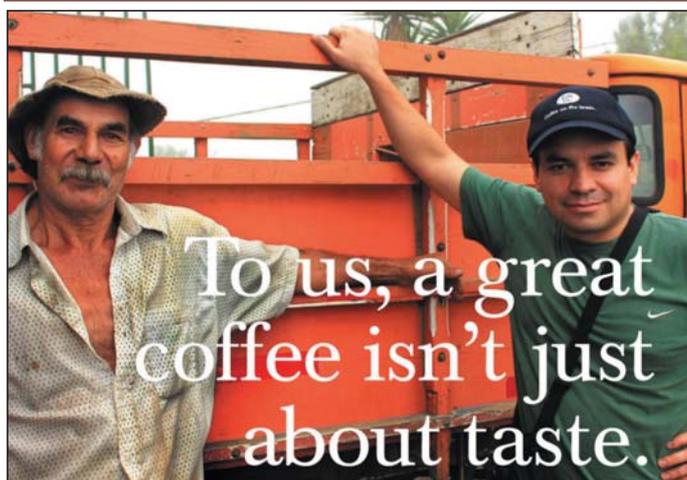
The Tim Hortons coffee chain, which is effectively as significant in Canada as Starbucks is in America, is to merge with the Burger King organisation, in a deal that may create the world's third largest fast-food company. As soon as it was confirmed that the two were in talks, Hortons share value grew by 28 per cent in two days. Meanwhile and

separately, Hortons has made the remarkable move of offering a second coffee choice - after offering only one coffee blend throughout its 50-year history, it was reportedly prompted to launch a new dark roast blend to counter market gains by Starbucks and McDonald's.

A shop manager from the Esquires chain has been badly injured on the first day of a marathon charity cycle challenge in the America. Steven Prime from the Coventry café, who has been involved in a lot of charity and community work, was setting out to cycle 1,400 miles down the west coast of the USA but was hit by a truck which had swerved to avoid another vehicle. He suffered broken bones in his back and wrist, and six broken ribs.

The Draughts board-game café, which proposes to open in east London later this year, has exceeded the target it hoped to raise through the Kickstarter crowdfunding website. The founders had hoped to achieve investment of £10,000, a target which was reached in just six days, and very soon they had topped £15,000 with pledges from over 300 investors.

A curious phenomenon which has cropped up in several newspapers and magazines is Barista Britain, a facility which allows readers to enter their postcode, and find out how many Costas, Starbucks and Caffe Neros are within one mile or within five miles. Clever, but we regret that we have yet find out who is behind it.



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There continues to be new activity in the cycling-café world. At the Spoke, the 'coffee, burgers and cycling' café in Holloway Road, London, a restaurant critic writes approvingly of seeing a blackboard poem reading: "Locking wheel to post / Browning bread to toast / Coffee beans to roast / To a friend I spoke".

Meanwhile, the Bicus y Mas cycling cafe in York won licensing approval, in spite of six objections from near neighbours. Most of these objections concerned noise, but there was a discussion concerning smoking outside the shop, which is not what might be expected at a cycling café!

Shade-Zone of Hull, a maker of awnings, canopies and similar external furniture, has been given a 'contractor of the year' award by Caffè Nero. The company began working with the chain in 2008 and now works for the chain's cafes in the UK, Ireland, Poland, Cyprus and Dubai. The company remarked that all Caffè Nero external furniture is bespoke, not from stock items.

The council in North Lincolnshire has created a Tea Pot Trail covering 11 tea-rooms from Epworth to Barton-Upon-Humber. The aim is to encourage the public to visit as many of the region's tearooms as possible. There is also a proposed vote for a contest to decide the best tearoom in a competition called the Great North Lincolnshire Cake-Off.

Cafe du Monde has been very pleased with the British successes at the recent Commonwealth Games – it is a sponsor of Camberley Judo Club which provided three of the seven male England contestants, who won three gold medals in the space of 24 hours.

An argument over a tea-room lease in Epping Forest has been the subject of an appeal to the Queen, although Her Majesty has declined to become involved. The operator of a tea hut, whose family has run the business there for 84 years, says that the local authority has put the lease out for tender, even though local residents want the current operator to continue. He wrote to the monarch, whose office replied: "Her Majesty has taken careful note of your concern... but this is not a matter in which The Queen would personally intervene". The matter has been referred to the Secretary of State for communities and local government, who is also the local MP.

Euro Garages, which has a continuing partnership with Starbucks, is seeking permission for a combined service station and coffee bar in Cockermouth despite fears it could both affect other businesses and threaten the local red squirrel population.

Complaints about hotel coffee are nothing new, but UCC Coffee now says that it has evidence that 75 per cent of hotel guests are dissatisfied with the quality of coffee in their hotel bedroom, rating it either 'poor' or 'average'. One third of these consumers are reported to have said that they would consider not returning to a hotel which served poor coffee. Rather unexpectedly, boutique hotels fared worse in the survey, with 40% of respondents saying the quality of their coffee was 'very poor'. Equally surprisingly, bed-and-breakfast establishments were rated highest for coffee quality.

Costa Coffee has applied to open in Launceston, Cornwall - the national operations director travelled to meet councillors and commerce leaders in the town hall, while four coffee shops in the town have proposed similar opposition to the campaign which saw Costa back away from Totnes two years ago. They say they have received 500 responses to a survey on the matter. One owner said: "the passion matches the strength of feeling in Totnes but it is more difficult for a small place like Launceston because we don't have the numbers. I think it is easier for Costa to come into Launceston for that reason."

Following our feature on athlete Kelly Holmes and her plans for her new coffee house in Hildenborough, the name of the business has now been revealed – it is Café 1809 Hildenborough. The figure is the number she wore when she won both her Olympic golds at Athens.

The Suki Tea brand of Belfast is to create Ireland's first Tea Academy, intended to train retail and foodservice staff. The company has received a grant from the Invest NI Jobs Fund towards setting up the facility. Suki's Oscar Woolley told us: "the academy is to support companies wanting to boost their tea sales by making their staff into tea champions. In the sessions we discuss a bit of tea history, origin, process and then jump into tea tasting. We also cover trends and motivational ideas."

Is commodity coffee widely contaminated?

There has been a less-than-convincing response to an internationally-reported scare story begun by the American Chemical Society, which recently alleged that not only is a large amount of the world's coffee 'bulked up' by filler items ranging from wheat to twigs, but that much of this was quite deliberately done. Researchers from a university in Brazil speculated that the deliberate use of fillers might become more common in times of coffee shortage.

The research team used liquid chromatography to identify the compounds in coffee which carry a 'characteristic fingerprint'. In simplistic terms, this allows them to scan a sack and confirm how much of the contents are real coffee – anything else is therefore an unacceptable ingredient. Previous tests have used microscope analysis or taste, and are believed to be inaccurate or biased, said the Brazilian research team.

"After roasting and grinding, the dark colour and oily texture of coffee makes it impossible to see any difference between coffee and grains of anything else," said the research leader.

"With our test, it is now possible to know with 95 per cent accuracy if coffee is pure or has been tampered with, either with corn, barley, wheat, soybeans, rice, beans, acai seed, brown sugar or starch syrup."

The story received worldwide coverage, but no response from the coffee industry, until the National Coffee Association in America protested that the USA's Food Fraud Database, a method of recording cases of food adulteration, contains no evidence of any such problem with coffee.

It added that the coffee supply chain is so tightly monitored at every stage, with coffee graded and cupped at so many stages, that there is just no room for foreign matter to finish up with the consumer. As a result, it accused the researchers of using a cheap publicity trick to promote a newly-developed chemical testing technology.

However, it has now been pointed out that the NCA's objection may not be strictly correct. The operators of the American fraud database have in the past noted that coffee was one of the top seven items to be covered in their work between 1980 and 2010, and only last month, before the Brazilian research was published, an American newspaper reported that the database had come up with yet another case of ground coffee being contaminated with other finely-ground items.

Elsewhere, the Greenpeace pressure group has said that samples of leading tea brands tested in India have shown chemical contamination - specifically, from pesticides not approved for use on tea crops. The charges were denied by the Tea Board of India.

With remarkable unanimity, the regional press have all come up with the phrase 'Doctor Loo' for the conversion of a blue police box into a toilet at a Bristol cafe. The Who Loo is at the Warmley Waiting Room cafe on the Bristol and Bath Railway Path, a 13-mile off-road route between the two cities. The old police box reportedly cost £1,800. The café owners say that several times a day they get asked the question: 'is it bigger on the inside?'

Elsewhere, a disused red phone box has become Scotland's smallest 24-hour internet café, with coffee, and tourist information centre. It is in Aberdeenshire, and was bought from BT for one pound, which appears to be the going rate for these things, by Ballogie and Birse Community Council. The neighbouring Butterworth art gallery used to have a tea room, which they closed, but as tourists kept calling and asking for tea, they decided to install a machine in the phone box. Visitors can now make themselves a coffee, go online, or check the information on local attractions.



Tea room wins over local Dragons

A proposed tea room has won backing from Dacorum's Dragons, which is an imaginative local authority parallel to the television show for would-be entrepreneurs.

Dacorum is a borough in Hertfordshire, and a couple of years ago it began a scheme in which it offered to give grants to local projects which made a good case to a panel made up of representatives from local businesses, a business officer from the council, and Hemel Hempstead's MP.

It has now supported the Tea Tree in Hemel Hempstead, a business proposed by Lisa Westwood, who was born locally and who has worked in cafes locally, but had a dream of her own tea rooms. She was one of eight who won a grant for her new business, and also won a further £1,000 as the judges' favourite choice.



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Another coffee and science fiction café has opened - this is Kuni Coffee of Rugby, which opened with a signing session by Red Dwarf star Chris Barrie in August. We believe he also opened the Daventry branch last year - and this time, he signed autographs for a full three hours. Yes, that does appear to be a dalek in the crowds waiting for the opening...

Grain-based lattes in the US

The benefits of totally grain-based 'coffees' have been promoted by a specific business in New York, which serves coffee-style drinks including lattes and frappuccinos, based on a mix of grains. Caffè Bene is a Korean-based chain that typically makes a five-grain coffee latte with sesame, barley, black beans, brown rice and soybeans. The owner says that when customers realise what is in the drink, they are initially 'repulsed', but pleasantly surprised when they taste it.

The concept is a long-established one in South Korea, where it is known as misugaru, a protein-rich powder traditionally made with white and brown rice, barley, black rice, alda beans, black beans, corn, white bean, millet and sesame seeds that are ground and roasted.

Subscription coffee gets more backing

The continuing popularity of subscription coffee services has been illustrated by the success of Pact Coffee in achieving £2 million in venture funding.

Pact is based in Bermondsey, and has shown 'significant growth' since raising seed funding in March last year.

In an interesting observation on the relatively-recent phenomenon of subscription coffee, founder Stephen Rapoport has said that the business model is 'not as simple as it looks from the outside - the frictionless customer experience has taken 18 months' hard work and we are still just five per cent of the way there'.

The Café 55 in Exeter has been shortlisted for a national award by Signature, the leading body in deaf communications - it has been named as one of four contenders in the Community Spirit category, which honour those who work to break down the barriers of communication between deaf and hearing people. Café 55 offers people with sight and hearing difficulties the chance to gain work experience within the catering industry. It encourages patrons to place their orders using British Sign Language with large posters featuring BSL words such as 'welcome', 'coffee' and 'tea'. The café manager has said that the project has taken off so well that the café has extended its opening hours and been able to take on more placement staff.



Coffee tamping does contribute to lower back pain

The effect of day-to-day barista work on health has finally become the subject of a research paper. A project in America has been based on an examination of low-back and shoulder-related activity during the preparation of espresso-based beverages, undertaken partly by questionnaire and also by video for 'bio-mechanical analysis'.

Seventy-three per cent of respondents reported having experienced lower back pain, half of them blaming their work. Another 68 per cent reported shoulder pain, and again half put it down to barista work.

Particular attention was paid to tamping, which baristas had complained is the most strenuous task involved in preparing espresso. It will come as no surprise to the trade to read the researchers' report that "during manual tamping, it was observed that baristas put their body into awkward positions in which they then apply considerable force vertically downward... those who reported

lower back pain tended to be those who perform manual tamping."

The researchers noted that "although the process of making espresso-based drinks is not considered a very labour-intensive task, there are many components to the process that may significantly, over time, contribute to pain of the low back and/or shoulder regions in baristas.

"The data reported in this article will be used to create new or redesign existing tools used by baristas, including tampers, and to redesign workplaces for baristas."



The Urban Shed, which is a coffee house run by three trained chefs in Cambridge, has reported appearing at the top of Trip Advisor's rankings for the city, above even a Michelin-starred restaurant. The founders have said that their coffee house has 'almost a pub atmosphere', and is unusual in that regular customers have their own locker and cup. It is also unusual in that all the furniture is recycled or 'upcycled' (there are some aircraft seats in there) and is also for sale if a customer cares to make an offer. The use of old tin cans as cutlery holders is quite novel. The coffee is by Coffee World of Newmarket.

How the gold-rush coffee brands laid down the law to consumers...

An archaeologist in Alaska has produced a specialist guide to coffee cans, a packaging format which is more common in America than here. It appears that in the late 1800s, only one coffee brand mastered a vacuum-sealing can technology for coffee, and that made it the favourite choice of gold-rush miners.

A researcher who is working on the history of Alaska in those days, and apparently there are many abandoned camp cabins still around, has discovered that discarded coffee cans have given him an invaluable way of measuring dates and times - by referring to the way that designs on the cans changed over the years, he can fairly accurately establish when certain camps were operational.

"They didn't leave their diary on the table," he has said, "but these coffee cans show up often enough in their dumps to give us good information."

What is particularly intriguing for the

trade is a message which appeared on the Hills Bros coffee cans a little later, slightly after the first gold-rush frenzy had settled down, probably around 1914, and which pre-dated the attitude of today's artisan roasters by a clear hundred years.

It said: 'Our coffee is turned over to you in perfect condition. Here our responsibility ceases, and unless you co-operate with us by seeing that the coffee is made properly, our efforts and your money will be wasted'.

Now, that's the way to tell them... would today's brands dare to take that approach with hotels?



Beyond the Bean has been having some fun with the rather standard commodity item known as the coffee clutch. Searching for a new idea, the company designed clutches which can be gently bent to create a Venetian masquerade-style mask.

Honour pays...

There has been another interesting instance of the 'honour' system in a coffee shop achieving surprising rewards - in this case, bringing in more revenue than would have come from conventional trade.

The Vault is a coffee shop in Valley City, North Dakota, which reportedly managed to cut down on overheads by simply hiring no baristas - customers can serve themselves from a bulk brewer or choose espresso from a capsule machine.

There is a cash point where customers can pay by cash or card (there is a sign saying 'no IOUs!') and in the first ten months of the business, the revenue has been 15 per cent higher than the menu price of the items consumed.

Furthermore, says the owner, the instore CCTV system has failed to show a single instance of anyone taking coffee and not paying, or even removing the honour box.

No colour in Frinton

In a remarkable display of local power, local councillors have demanded that a retail chain change its corporate colours to fit their town.

The council at Frinton, described by the local tourist authority as 'an exclusive resort which retains an atmosphere of the 1920/30s', has told Sainsbury's that its orange branding is not suitable for the town, and that it should use more restrained black signage with gold lettering.

Frinton has an approved shopfront guide which can influence planning applications, and which dictates that colours should be 'muted' and that 'the garish colours of modern plastics must be avoided'. The council has also pointed out that the original Sainsbury lived in Frinton, and say that he would have approved of their stand.

There is a precedent in the coffee and fast-food world - in a famous high-class galleria in Milan, McDonald's cafe was prevented from using red and yellow, and turned its logo into black and gold.

The Olde Young tea house in Middlesbrough has been given the quite remarkable accolade of 'the UK's top independent business', in a competition organised by Kerching, a retail business consultancy.

La Marzocco is to host the 2015 UK latte art championship – which, oddly, will be held in December 2014. The reigning UK latte art champ is Dhan Tamang of Caracoli cafes in Hampshire, who tells us that he was unable to compete in the world championship this year, but has already devised his next design and has tried it out on customers.

De Grey's tea room in Ludlow, which was closed in January, is to be re-opened by its new owners, the restaurant group Tasty Plc, which has now acknowledged local opinion by keeping the old name, and also the traditional tearoom and bakery. The new owner says he will retain the old name and use his own brand, by calling the business Wildwood at De Grey's.

Peet's Coffee & Tea, the long-established American company, has taken over the Mighty Leaf tea brand, which is distributed here by Somerset Distribution.

Two brands have introduced interesting cold drinks. Zuma, from Beyond the Bean, has created the non-dairy vanilla bean frappe, after hearing operators' annoyance at having to stock two different frappé powders to cater for free-from diets. Meanwhile, Leon restaurants have introduced milk-free shakes, made with unsweetened almond milk – they are dairy, gluten and wheat-free.

The Fairtrade Foundation has come up with another of its rather offbeat themes for its autumn awareness campaign at the end of September. It wants to assess public attitude to 'fairness', and is going to hold and film 'experiments' at a coffee cart. "They will observe consumers' responses to everyday things that they might think of as unfair," the Foundation told us, "for example, someone queue-jumping, or being served a smaller coffee than others but for the same price." The Foundation is also planning a Great British Fairness Test, which is being written by a psychologist and will look at issues of personal fairness in day-to-day life. We do not yet know what the result of all this will be.

The press in Nottingham reports that a 'six-figure sum' has gone into the new 200 Degrees coffee shop planned for Flying Horse Walk arcade. The owners already have the Belle and Jerome coffee house in West Bridgford and three bistros at garden centres. Coffee comes from their own roastery in Nottingham, and the new café will feature barista classes and coffee courses.

Silly-season spats in the world of tea

It really is the silly season for stories about teabags, and the biggest of them has been the case of Tetley versus PG Tips, which went to a ruling by the Advertising Standards Authority.

This involved a TV commercial in which the PG Tips woolly monkey character and comedian Johnny Vegas were shown comparing the quality of PG's pyramid bag against an unbranded round tea-bag.

The comedian says: "PG Tips uses pyramid bags, so if we test one against a regular tea bag, you'll see the tea has got more room to move, freeing the great fresh taste for a perfect cuppa."

A complaint was made to the ASA by Tata Global Beverages, owner of the Tetley brand.

They complained that the visual demonstration was misleading and exaggerated the qualities of the advertised product; they argued that the claim "the tea has more room to move, freeing the great, fresh taste" was misleading and that it could not be substantiated that a specific shape produced a better cup of tea; and they claimed that the comparison of the pyramid to a round bag denigrated the Tetley brand because it could be identified as the competitor.

Unilever, the owner of PG Tips, responded with a research document that compared the performance of three different-shaped teabags, and said that the round bag in its commercial was not identifiable as Tetley.

The ASA reported thus: "We were satisfied that Unilever had proved its claims. It provided test results which showed that the infusion of tea was greater when using a pyramid teabag than when using a round teabag. Also, as the comparison was not made with an identifiable competitor, we concluded that the ad did not denigrate Tetley."

The ASA added that it did not think consumers would interpret the PG Tips ad as 'a rigorous scientific test'.

The extremely bizarre aspect of the story is, of course, that Tata Global Beverages are the ultimate parent of Teapigs, which has been the clear pioneer of the entire pyramid tea-bag concept. For it to have complained against a claim that pyramids work better might be construed as a little corporate mischief!

What is really disturbing about that story is the way that it has since been manipulated – one PR agency has recently issued a statement on behalf of a tea client, saying that "the recent ASA ruling has regulated that pyramid shaped bags are more efficient than the more traditional flat, round tea bags". The ASA has, of course, no right to 'regulate' any such thing.

There has been an even stranger spat elsewhere in the tea world, with



The PG Tips monkey – would consumers have believed this to be a rigorous scientific test?

the story of Typhoo reportedly suing a smaller blender over alleged 'false accusations' about the quality of its tea.

The claim centres on a report supposedly presented to retailers and wholesalers as 'the independent conclusions' of a third party, showing that Typhoo had 'dramatically' dropped in quality and value. The big brand has claimed that the independent report was 'deliberately edited to give false and misleading impressions'.

Another story about tea-bags entertained the general press, with the news that a 'professional food and drink taster' has decreed that exactly 25 seconds is the optimum length of time for a tea-bag to be left in the teacup. Bizarrely, he came up with the finding after drinking 400 cups of tea in 48 hours, which might be a total that could be said to adversely affect anyone's tasting ability.

He stipulated that the tea-bags in question should be those of the 'dust' variety, which "have lost the wonderful flavour nuances associated with full-leaf Assams, Darjeelings and Oolong teas."

By contrast, other researchers at Northumbria University say it takes eight minutes to prepare the perfect tea brew. They spent 180 hours on that one.



Crowd-funding works in the North

The Cup North coffee festival planned for Manchester has succeeded in making its crowd-funded target – indeed, the use of that concept to finance coffee projects has occurred twice in in the city in a relatively short space of time.

The proposed Cup North two-day coffee festival is planned for 1-2nd November, in the Artwork building in Greengate, Salford. The two days will see the usual festival mix of coffee, tea and chocolate exhibitors, competitions, tastings, live music, and so on, but with the addition of a live Tamper Tantrum, the coffee-themed debate series invented by Steve Leighton of the Has Bean roastery.



In the same city, an accounting firm has recently helped the Grindsmith coffee company use the crowdfunding principle to raise £10,000 for their extremely well-designed coffee pod.

Grindsmith chose the crowdfunding route for expansion and development after deciding that a conventional loan would mean that initial overheads would be too heavy.

They researched the Kickstarter concept by investing in projects themselves to see what backers might expect and achieve, and then opened the 30-day investment offer which Kickstarter allows.

They reached their target through 89 investors from the local area and one from Australia. An interesting aspect of such funding, says one of the partners, is that investors now tend to become customers, because they have an interest in the success of the business.

(Those who invested generously in the business have their name displayed inside the pod; all investors also received a laser-cut wooden token).

This, believe it or not, is a coffee machine. It is made by Dutch Lab, which is a design house in Korea, and it has been described, probably perfectly reasonably, as 'a towering behemoth of a drinks maker'. It is actually a working slow-drip cold brewer. The machines go under the general name of Steampunk, though it is nothing to do with the American coffee brewer of that name. Dutch Labs have built brewers which follow such design themes as the Eiffel Tower, Big Ben, and even King Kong on the Empire State Building. Prices are around £4,200.

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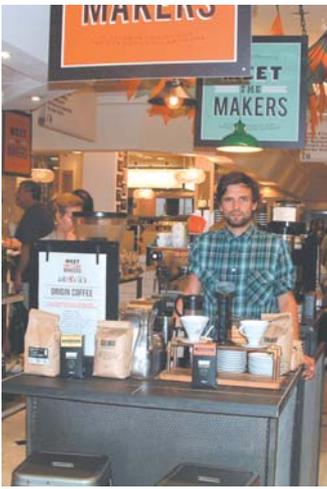
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We reported recently that Origin, the coffee roasters from Cornwall, has set up a stand in the Selfridges store in London.

The stall turns out to be in the Meet the Makers section of the food hall, and we have been interested to find out that it is not just a retail exercise, but provides a clever way for a regional roaster to make contact with potential clients in London – the phrase 'come and try our coffee at Selfridges' does have rather a ring to it!

The small stand in Selfridges is manned by barista Tom Pye, who told us that the stall is now doing a very respectable amount of business.

"We found when we started that the figures fluctuated massively, and we saw no reason why - now we're doing the same figures each day. A lot of the Selfridges staff have now become customers, and have started coming back twice a day.

"It is a really odd demographic here. Most of our customers are 20-35, which is probably the complete opposite of a lot of people who shop at Selfridges. Many of those who come to us are probably not here as 'shoppers', but have come because it's a tourist attraction... then they see us and realise they can get good coffee here.

"They have certainly been very surprised at the quality. We have put in a grinder, so we can grind and seal, and let them take fresh beans home, and we know this is the kind of business we want, because people who buy beans will come back.

"I have done this in London before, and it was clear that not only are incredible bean sales possible, but that the people who buy on a Monday will also come back to buy on a Friday."

The stand has a couple of chairs in front of it, allowing for the barista to 'present' to customers and clients on the various aspects of Origin's offer.

The one initial snag was the unfamiliarity of the name. Selfridges has several badged staff walking around to answer enquiries, and on several occasions, asking them for 'Origin Espresso', we were directed to the Nespresso concession, which of course is a rather different thing...

Allegra plans an international multi-skill barista contest

Allegra, the coffee research house which publishes the London Coffee Guide, has launched an ambitious barista contest – it is intended to be "the only all-round multi-discipline barista competition of its kind".

The Coffee Masters event will be held at Allegra's next London Coffee Festival, at the end of April.

It promises "top baristas from across the globe" competing for a £5,000 cash prize.

The unique aspect of it, the organisers tell us, is the format which involves baristas competing across a range of disciplines, to include cupping, brewing, latte art, signature drink and 'the order challenge'. We are told: "the order round will test the baristas' ability to make an order on the spot under strict time constraints."

This does sound like something we

have come across before - there has been an American contest which required entrants to respond to a batch of orders shouted to them from the audience, with nobody knowing what drinks would crop up, or in what order.

Baristas will be able to enter the competition from October, by submitting a one-minute video of themselves presenting a signature drink and answering the question 'what makes you a Coffee Master?' Contenders will be chosen based on their video (a method which has also been used in the USA).

Let business take risks, says ideas man

Curiously, the Edinburgh Fringe festival has cropped up in two business stories this month. Most notably, a specialist in strategic thinking has suggested that businesses should look to the Fringe for ideas on how to run a commercial operation.

We have often quoted the consultant Paul Sloane, who is a specialist on lateral thinking in business (we are astonished he has never been invited to address the beverage trade!) who has now said that the recent Edinburgh Fringe festival can give us lessons about entrepreneurship.

He comments: "the world's largest annual arts festival has become an experimental playground. This can teach us some lessons about entrepreneurship because each show is like a small business start-up.

"The Fringe provides a place for start-ups to try out new, edgy material at relatively low cost and low risk, but giving instant reaction and feedback. Every start-up needs this.

"The response is the reward. Very few shows make serious profits at the Fringe, but get exposure which can lead to further business. Similarly, many start-up businesses need viral exposure ahead of revenue.

"It is a safe place to fail. Those who flop one year may return the next and try again with a different approach. They quickly learn what works and what does not.

"If we want more entrepreneurs and more new businesses, then the Fringe might be a useful model to follow. We need safe places for creative entrepreneurs to try out their ideas."

Meanwhile, performers from the Edinburgh event have appeared at the Appetite café in Hanley, in a pop-up scheme funded in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent council.

Consumers can buy food and drink and then choose to order a performance as well. The project has also devised the very curious Folk in a Box option – it's like a little doll's house, which has one door for the audience and one stage door for the performer.

One customer at a time pays for one song, performed by one musician.

The dangers of powdered caffeine

There has been some international attention to the subject of caffeine powder, following a warning by the Food and Drug Administration in America that it may act against the product, which is readily available and so strong that a teaspoon is equivalent to 25 cups of coffee.

Adolescents are particularly drawn to it as a stimulant, the FDA has said. The statement came after the death of an 18-year-old who had overdosed on powdered caffeine.

A spokesman said that consumers who drink coffee may recognise the normal mild effects of caffeine, but without realising the potency of it in pure form. "The difference between a safe amount of caffeine and a lethal

dose in these powdered products is very small," she said.

The topic has already come up in the UK. A coroner recorded a verdict of accidental death on a teenager who died four years ago after swallowing two spoonfuls of caffeine powder and washing them down with a caffeinated energy drink.

The inquest heard that the product packaging carried a warning that only one-sixteenth of a tablespoon should be consumed, but that the boy had 251 grammes of caffeine per litre of blood in his body, (A caffeine powder currently available in the UK at £7.77 for 100gm carries the guidance that 'the recommended daily allowance is 300 to 400 milligrammes'.)



This is probably the biggest tree-house café in the world – maybe the only one. It is the centrepiece of the Du Mien Garden Café in Ho Chi Minh City, built around a massive Malayan banyan tree. The entire site occupies roughly 3,000 square metres with more than 700 seats.

The high street 'will be the death of the town'

The local press in East Grinstead has put in a Freedom of Information Act request to find out how many change-of-use applications have been approved by its local council, to convert retail premises to either coffee shops or financial service providers.

It reports that every one of 17 recent applications has been approved, a finding which has not gone down well with its readers.

The local business association has said a more varied high street is not possible because existing premises are not up to the standard that many big-name retailers expect, typically in that they have no rear access for deliveries.

As a result, it is only small businesses like coffee shops who will take them – the issue, therefore, is of a choice between coffee shops and empty shops.

One resident made the quite remarkable comment: "the high street will be the death of this town."



A nice A-board comment on the tastes of the customer base of the Liberty of Norton Folgate coffee-house in London. Tobacco, worn leather and notes of almond...

The smaller coffee companies have done extremely well in this year's Great Taste awards.

We can see that Hands On of Wadebridge took six awards, including three 3-stars, which is quite remarkable. Those high scorers were the Beast of Bodmin, the Lusty Glaze (it's a place in Cornwall!) and the Polzeath Tubetime, which we think refers to a registered charity that exists to be a Christian presence within surf culture, providing "positive activities for young people".

The Beanpress of Dorset got four awards, including one three-star for an Ethiopian from a Yeti farm, which makes for an interesting image, and neatly matches the two-star won by George Stephenson and his Mariners roastery of York for an organic Ethiopian Kaffa Forest, which is home to the last of Ethiopia's mountain lions.

The Monsoon Estate Coffee of Atherstone also took four prizes, the Fine Coffee Club of Edinburgh got three, and Bespoke Coffee of Devizes won two awards.

A notable scorer was the roastery at the Ludlow Food Centre, which took three awards - it roasts only for its own in-house café and its town centre deli. It won a two-star for its Ethiopian Yirgacheffe, and also scored with a Guatemalan (described as "red wine acidity with notes of demerara sugar, sour cherries, dark chocolate and a hint of cardamom") and its Espresso Blend No.3.

Among the other regionals that were recognised with awards were Owens of Modbury, Reads of Sherborne, World Coffees, the York Coffee Emporium, Coaltown of Carmarthen, Coffee Care of Skipton, the Coffee Factory of Axminster and Crafted Coffee of Chichester.

Glasgow's oldest traditional coffee roaster, Thomsons Coffee, picked up two awards. Its Rocco Supremo blend was awarded two stars, while its Doi Chang, which is a Thai coffee, also got a star.

Among the bigger names and bigger roasteries, Bewleys took 13 awards, of which eight were Grumpy Mule from its recently-acquired Yorkshire roaster. Also in the north, Taylors of Harrogate took 13 in total, with a mixture of tea and coffee awards.

Union Hand-Roasted got four, including a three-star rating for a Yirgacheffe, the Marley reggae coffee from Sea Island got an award for the One Love blend, and Café du Monde took three awards. Rather notably, these were all for the Chez Toi range - this is the collection of mainly single-origins which are packed in individual sachets and promoted through hotel bedrooms. The winners were a Colombian, a Kenyan, and the Grand Cru blend of Kenyan, Brazilian and Honduran.

Cafedirect did rather well this year with seven awards, covering tea, coffee and chocolate. Its Earl Grey tea is

Great tastes of 2014

It was the smaller companies who did best in this year's Great Taste awards - several of the independent regional coffee roasters did particularly well



The success of the London Tea Company in winning four stars for its teas has allowed the brand to shout about two more notable points that have come up at the same time - the entire London Tea range is now Fairtrade-certified, and there is a new display packaging format. These clear jars are extremely lightweight, being plastic instead of glass, and feature a metal fastener which is a hinge at one side and a clip at the other - it closes quite satisfyingly securely. The four award winners were its flagship London Breakfast, a blend of Assam and Kenyan, its vanilla chai, and two Chinese teas. These were the pure green Chunmee (called 'precious eyebrows', because of the shape of the leaf) and the jasmine green. Jasmine, as it has often been pointed out, is a notoriously difficult flavour to get right.

sourced from an area where the brand has organised the smallholders into a federation. Instead of selling to middle-men, the growers now have a direct relationship with the processing factory.

The Macchu Picchu coffee which we think wins a star every year, did so again, although we were puzzled by the judges' remark of "a good sourness which is well balanced against a sharp bitterness". We've always found it extremely smooth - with the current enthusiasm for filter coffees in food-service, this is probably a decent example of the theory that you can indeed get a very good Fairtrade filter coffee from a mainstream brand.

Cafedirect also won with its Costa Rican, and, quite notably, with its Espresso El Reto, and the intriguing thing about this is that it's a Nespresso-compatible capsule! The judges appeared to be curious about this, noting that capsules gave them different extraction times, but remarked on the 'solid dark roast' and 'lovely crema'.

This was not the only capsule winner - CafePod got four for Nespresso-compatible capsules, including two stars for its Fairtrade Colombian. And

Coffee Merchants UK took five, all of which were for ESE espresso pods.

The tea section is rather more complex, but we note that Imporient, with its Birchall brand, got ten including one three-star; this, we see, was a rooibos tea-bag. Rooibos crops up frequently in the tea section, but we don't recall a three-star winner before.



Cafedirect's Tarrazu Costa Rica

(The most interesting rooibos star-winner we saw this year was by Tea Huggers, and was a base of rooibos, blended with lemon balm, lavender, orange, hibiscus, elderberries, rosehip, and apple.)

Joe's Tea of London got four, including a three-star. The goal of this com-

pany is "to take the 'toff' out of fine tea, with quirky and colourful concoctions while keeping it real". Joe, we are told, really does blend his own teas, and the three-star was for the Proper Peppermint. Joe also won stars with a rooibos blend, the Chocca-Roo-Brew combination of rooibos, vanilla, and chocolate chips.

The Tea Company of London scored eight prizes - this is a small company which, despite the name, is from Lincolnshire. It sources directly from tea farmers, traditional tea gardens and small producers, and wants to support small estates which focus on retaining their traditional artisan ways.

The Just Be Botanical brand is from Edinburgh, where Gail Bryden hand-blends in small batches using organic loose leaf herbs. JustBe Happy, which won a two-stars, is a blend of lemon balm and hibiscus which the judges said "really is uplifting - we believe this to be a genuine contribution to the market. With a touch of honey or even palm sugar, as an iced tea it would be fabulous." The JustBe Active, which won a star, is a blend of spearmint and clove.

There were seven awards for Tea Studio, seven for Teapigs, and two three-stars from five prizes for Talisman of London.

Matcha, the green tea powder, was in evidence from Bloom, who won with three of them - a two-star for its Supercharge and one star each for Mindpower and Sunrise.

Chinalife of London, which of course specialises in Chinese teas, sent in eight entries and came back with ten stars. One of its unusual winners was Ruby Gala oolong, which is a Taiwanese tea allowed to oxidise in nitrogen for 36 hours to radically increase its gaba content - gaba is 'a soothing and anti-stress neuro-transmitter' found naturally in the body which can improve concentration and creative thought.

It was discovered twenty years ago, and is big in Japan, where gaba tea has become a standard part of the Japanese diet. The Japanese value gaba tea for its calming properties, but it has not caught on in the west. The Taiwanese have a problem understanding this, arguing that it has more health benefits than green tea, and more flavour.

(We do applaud Cup Glasgow and the Nela tea companies, who had the good grace in their entries to acknowledge Blends for Friends as their blenders... we believe blender Alex Probyn had, as usual, many other successes, but anonymously!)

When there are so many books about coffee on the market, the desirable mark of a good new one is that it tells you things you already knew but manages to make them interesting... and then adds things that you didn't know.

This, happily, is the case with a new coffee-table book from one of the very well-known names in British artisan coffee roasting - Anette Moldvaer, a co-owner of the Square Mile roaster. That roaster is quite notable for the number of champions who pass through its door, and Anette herself was world cup-tasting champion six or seven years ago.

So it would be quite understandable to expect that she would write an extremely geeky book about coffee... but she has not done so.

What is particularly pleasing about this one is that it is refreshingly clear and avoids the usual pompous language of coffee books. It makes its approach clear from the beginning - 'coffee is just a part of life for many, but for some it is a new and exciting phenomenon'. Yes, that's reasonable.

And it stays in everyday language from then on, thankfully avoiding all the pious clichés that crop up in most other coffee books. It is published by Dorling Kindersley, who are known for their educational works, so is this intended to be for the individual home coffee drinker, to the barista-training market, or to whom?

"I hope this book will be of use for someone who knows nothing about coffee but would like to get the broad overview, as well as someone who perhaps works in the business but lacks knowledge in one of the many areas it encompasses," Anette told us. "I wanted to write accessible information that will get you off to a good start if you're just beginning to explore or drink coffee, but still take it past the basics and give actual useful practical advice and debunk some myths."

It is the unexpected asides which make this book entertaining, and often more accessible than other such books - typically, the idea that seven or eight hundred years ago, travelling African herdsman mixed coffee seeds with fat and spices to create 'energy bars', is a delightful image.

More seriously, we rather enjoyed the factual information which is presented in an informal but informative way - that, for example, 5-6kg of cherries becomes one kilo of roasted beans... and that this figure may also be one tree's seasonal output. At the same time, where the differences between arabica and robusta are usually laid out in dry text pages, this book features a neat chart comparing them in a dozen major aspects, from the root system to the oil content of the beans - again, very clear.

In discussing quality, some opinions come in - not just that the difference in price between 'poor' and 'high quality' coffee is often very small, something which really should be pointed out to

Obsessive... but accessible

Another coffee book has arrived – and although this one comes with enough credentials for geekiness, it turns out to be highly readable



Anette Moldvaer in the roastery

more buyers in the general catering trades, but also the matching observation that 'in coffee, everything has a buyer - from the floor sweepings to the top one per cent'. (The same has been said about tea, of course).

Another opinion accompanies a very nice graphic asking 'what's on the bag of coffee?' as opposed to what is in it, suggesting the kind of information that a buyer really should look for on the bag. This comes with the observation that much coffee is retailed in attractive packaging that offers very little practical information, and also with the terse observation that 'best-before dates are not in the best interests of the coffee or the customer'.

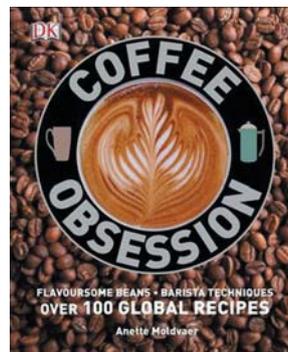
Some of the aspects of coffee which crop up in every such book do of course re-appear, as they must do, but with useful illustrations - typically, the question of the perfect crema. This is a matter we have reported on recently, bemoaning the lack of crema in many espressos we see... indeed, at one very big brand stand at Caffe Culture, four well-known members of the trade were served shots with no perceptible crema at all, and nobody complained until we mentioned it, at which point they were all swiftly collected and taken back to the bar!

"The crema is a by-product of the pressurised brewing, and the chemical composition of the coffees you use," responded Anette. "If you have robusta in your coffee you tend to get fluffier and more stable crema, and if you brew a pure arabica it'll often be slightly thinner and might dissipate a bit quicker. It's a visually pleasing element and can tell you a lot about the way the shot was brewed, but I'm not terribly fussed about the taste of it."

"I rarely get shots without crema

these days, because most places I go will be brewing pure arabica blends well, resulting in a smooth, dense, pleasing layer of foam. A total lack of crema would indicate to me that the brewing had gone wrong, typically that the ratio of coffee to water was off and/or the brew time too short.

"A lack of crema reflects worse on the barista than the coffee as far as



I'm concerned, but the two elements both have to be good if it's gonna taste nice!"

Two long parts of the book are particularly enjoyable. The first is the 65-page section on 'coffees of the world', which is a very well-illustrated collection of stories of coffee-producing countries, largely from Anette's own travel experience.

Many of them bring up interesting questions - for example, if in Jamaica, the varietal grown in the Blue Mountain area is the same as is grown elsewhere on the other side of the island, then how good is the coffee grown over the other side? Is it just as good, and has the highly-expensive JBM simply got all the marketing hype behind it?

"Those pages were the most fun and

both easiest and hardest to write, as I was limited by a set word count from the publishers, so there's a whole other book left in my eliminated notes!

"I have been to about half of the countries myself, and I had someone in all of them who I could ask for help and information.

"As for the Blue Mountain variety, it grows in several areas of the island of Jamaica, but is found in other countries as well, typically in Africa. The quality of the Blue Mountain grown in Jamaica is dependent on the same factors that determine quality of coffee anywhere, altitude, aspect, soil, farm practices, processing, etc.

"It's no secret that Jamaica Blue Mountain is one of the most well marketed coffees in the world, but sadly one of the most fraudulent too. Personally I think it can be clean and sweet when well prepared, but I don't find it to be the best in the world, nor the most exciting."

The other major section is sixty pages of coffee-related recipes, all of which the author has tested, and some of which are quite surprising - typically, the recipe for Green Fairy Juniper, which involves coffee brewed through cafetiere or Aeropress, gin, and, of all things, absinthe. At one time, the highly-potent absinthe was illegal, but today it can be bought online - typically, today you can find perhaps 70cl bottles of 72 per cent absinthe at around £30.

"I'm a sucker for the liquorice taste so I adore this drink, but it's pretty full-on so it's not for the faint hearted!" remarked Anette. "Pernod can be a good option if you can't get a hold of absinthe."

Similarly, there is a recipe for Irish coffee, which is a drink which even has its own world championships.

"A lot of this depends on the whiskey you use, but I find that a coffee with some texture and some sweet berry notes works well, something not too acidic or delicate. That can suggest many origins and regions, but for this drink I do tend to reach for the El Salvadors if I have them to hand."

As books about coffee go, this really is one of the more accessible, enjoyable, and easy-to-read ones, and at a decent price, too.

We had only one gripe, a very rare lapse into cliché. In one recipe, Anette falls into the awful modern trap of finishing the recipe with the words: 'pour the brewed coffee, add the warm milk to taste... and enjoy'. We have always said that if one more barista tells us to 'enjoy', we'll throw their coffee back at them.

But complaining about one word in over 200 interesting pages is probably being just a little too nit-picking!

Coffee Obsession, by Anette Moldvaer, is published by Dorling Kindersley. We have been given no recommended price, but have seen it available at £10.49.


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The word 'training' is widely misused and abused in the beverage sector – which is why it is such a curiosity that coffee schools and 'academies' continue to be one of the fastest-growing items in the industry.

Many barista trainers, it is accepted, are genuine experts, well qualified and able to share their knowledge... and some trainers are people who failed to make a success of conventional coffee trade work, but have discovered a very lucrative alternative in claiming to have experience worth passing on!

On Caffe Connect, the news and features website allied to the trade's main show, we recently highlighted the gulf between the great trainers and the rest, by addressing the subject of 'training for the modern coffee house'. It was a distinction which completely fooled some average-standard barista trainers, although two or three of the better players saw the point clearly and were able to debate what is required for the trade of 2014.

It has become fashionable for companies to start their own training schools, and at Harris and Hoole, there is now a brand new training suite in south London. This is of course the chain which arouses divided opinions - widely respected for its pedigree from Taylor Street Baristas, yet in some places its deal with Tesco is regarded as pretty much a pact with the devil.

In opening the new training facilities, the brand's co-founder Andrew Tolley was ready to take up the question of 'modern' training in coffee.

"This is a very involved question. For a good barista, you now need to break training down into two parts - what they need to know, and what they need to do.

"Perhaps training in the past didn't go backwards from the machine, but now, if you want your staff to understand how to get the taste you need, they now have to understand the complexities of brew ratios and temperatures, and if you want them to be able to explain it to customers, they have to understand where it all comes from... this is a fundamental exercise if you want your staff to be able to talk knowledgeably to your customers.

"So on our initial training courses, we now train to above the SCAE intermediate barista standards. And we do the same for filter coffee brewing, and for tea, and for chocolate! So yes, we do go back a bit farther than the kind of trainers who start at the machine, and start with 'this is what you do...'"

New starts at Harris and Hoole now get an entire week immersed in the subject before they are let loose on customers.

"There are two classroom days, which effectively amount to six hours of coffee knowledge and sensory skills, mainly based around the coffees we use in our shops. This means we show them some phenomenal coffee

Working backwards from the machine



Andrew Tolley

fees that we get from Union Hand-Roasted, and they finish these days knowing a lot about different profiles. Then there are four days of practical training."

With filter coffee becoming such an important part of modern coffee-house life, Andrew Tolley accepts that trainees have to hear more than the old-fashioned catering trade attitude of 'throw in a handful of coffee and slosh some hot water on it...' On the other hand, he is not convinced that filter coffee has to be approached as a ritual designed to allow the barista to show off his esoteric skills.

"Sometimes, you go into great speciality coffee shops, you see all the performance, and you end up wondering why their filter coffee is not so good!

"Filter is the greatest expression of a coffee, it's something we want to do more, and we have plans for serving a multiple choice of origins through filter... but outside London, there is still a negative perception about what filter coffee is. We're suffering from the old pub-coffee image.

“ Sometimes, you go into great speciality coffee shops, you see all the performance, and you end up wondering why their filter coffee is not so good! ”

"We now run batch-brew filter across our shops. We do 1.8 litre batches through the Bunn ICB, which is a great piece of kit, and very stable.

"So again, our filter coffee training is not usual. We buy great grinders, and help them understand the importance of the freshness of grind, and the importance of dosings and settings. We show that when you get the pre-

liminaries right, that means you get the right result when you hit the button... and yes, a lot of training in the past has started with 'you hit this button...!'"

What is the expected result for a Harris and Hoole trainee?

"What we are doing here is opening the book and talking about it - we know nobody will ever get to the end of it all, but we know that we can still give them a very good start, and that we can continue to train in the shops, backed up with training resources on our intranet.

"Do we expect them to be enthusiastic about it? Enthusiasm is something you have to breed - we expect them to 'like' coffee when they come in for training, and be 'enthusiastic' about it when they leave... otherwise we've failed."

That enthusiasm, notes Andrew Tolley, is something which has to communicate itself when staff go out into the big world of a high-street café. The Harris and Hoole name comes from the two characters in Pepys' diaries, whom he meets in a London

coffee house. "for there, I perceive, is witty and pleasant discourse". That quote is still pasted on the wall of Tolley's flagship store in Cannon Street, London, where there is indeed a conversational buzz.

The design of this site should be sterile, we suggested to Andrew Tolley, and yet it works. The barista station is, against all conventional wis-

dom, sited in a far corner, with the slightly impersonal signage 'coffee pickup 1 and 2', and the seating is of two plain long tables with stools, one an island and one at the window. Is the noise of conversation the result or the aim of communal tables?

And what part does barista training play in the atmosphere of a café?

"A lot of thought goes into what makes up a 'favourable experience', and the biggest 'experience' is about how the staff act - how they talk to you, how they keep it clean, even what music they play (the choice is theirs - they have guidelines, but after that it's relatively open to them). Cannon Street's clientele is bankers, lawyers, and city professionals... and the staff have to treat them all like 'persons!'"

What do staff need to know about coffee and food sourcing?

"Where coffee has come a long way in the last few years is in relationships in which producers are rewarded for quality by good prices. I don't always need to know all my producers face to face, and nor do my baristas, but we do both need to know about what challenges the farmers face in producing coffee, and our staff do need to understand that we have to be in continuous contact to achieve consistent quality over the years.

"I want Harris and Hoole to be as well regarded for its food as its coffee, because the two do go hand in hand. We know that a lot of Australian coffee shops do incredibly well with food, of a high enough quality that they now even take business from restaurants.

"But this requires a lot of creativity, and facilities onsite. The problem with a café is that you have different timings, from morning to afternoon, which means you need different food options, and yet you are limited to what you can produce onsite. We now produce most of ours in a central kitchen, but it remains a constant experiment to find out what will be unique to Harris and Hoole - do we go all-British, or all continental? We still don't have the answer.

"So, what our staff need to know about our food is the principle that it has to be hand-made, and has to have ingredients with 'provenance' - that's not 'local' ingredients just to be trendy, but ingredients which we know to be good, which we know where they come from, and we're willing to talk about.

"What the customer appreciates about something as simple as a sandwich is that it must clearly be fresh, hand-made, of good ingredients, and clearly made well."

The modern pour-over machine, which has been in development for several years, has begun to appear on sale internationally.

This machine is not new, having made its first appearance in 2013, but it has recently attracted the attention of the gadget internet sites and press, has become available for wider sale around the world, and so has come in for more attention.

It is the Wilfa Svart Presisjona modern version of the pour-over, and was developed by the Nordic company Wilfa, who had approached barista champ Tim Wendelboe to advise them. He has said:

"Since the brewer was made for the consumers and not the elite of the barista world, we had to make it simple to use and of course there would have to be some compromises in order not to make the brewer too expensive."

The brewer comes with a detachable water tank; most domestic pourovers, Wwendelboe has noted, have a fixed tank and the user has to fill it using the serving carafe which is often dirty.

"The water tank also has measurement markings with recommended coffee to water brew ratios. He also notes that some pourovers have a certain amount of water left inside after a brew, which can go stale and affect the next brew – this one pumps out leftover water.

The modern pour-over arrives

It is one of the oldest methods of serving coffee in pubs and similar venues... now it has precision



The brewing temperature is between 92C - 96C, and Wendelboe says that it heats remarkably quickly, and is the most temperature-stable filter brewer for the domestic market so far. (He notes also that the brewer can easily be used as a hot water dispenser for other methods, such as the Chemex, or Hario V60).

It does have a hotplate, the pour-over item which arouses so much argument among geeks; this, we are told, cannot be independently turned

off. Instead of using it to keep coffee hot, just brew less and decant it, says Tim Wendelboe!

An unusual feature is a flow control on the filter holder. "The problem with filter brewing of pre-ground coffee," Wendelboe has said, "is that you are using gravity to pass the water through the coffee.

"If you brew small amounts of coffee, the water will pass through the coffee faster than if you are brewing large amounts, as there is less resistance for the water. Therefore, you need to grind coarser for a half-litre brew than for a litre – but this is impossible when using pre-ground coffee.

"The way round it is to restrict the flow on the smaller brew in order to increase the extraction time and get enough flavour from the coffee.

Although it is a domestic machine, one reviewer says that they have successfully used it to brew for 50 people at a party.

The Wilfa is not cheap, at \$275 upwards in America. We have yet to obtain a price for the UK.

In Morpeth, the annual Meet The Mayor event was turned into a promotion for the town's coffee-houses – the mayor invited local cafes to cater for the event, and five did so. New Market Nibbles, the Chantry Tea Rooms, Peppermint Tea Rooms, Cafe Des Amis and Gletons all took up the offer.

Yet another piece of beverage research (do scientists do nothing else?) now tells us that 'coffee naps' are the way to maximise the effects of both sleep and caffeine. The recommendation is to drink a cup of coffee quickly, then try for a 20-minute nap. In that time, the brain doesn't have time to fall deeply asleep, but does have enough time to clear out adenosine, which we are told is 'a byproduct of activity in the mind'... and caffeine has time to travel across the brain and fit into where the adenosine has been. The researchers say research subjects made fewer errors in simulated driving scenarios and other tests, proving that people function better after 'coffee naps'.

Vegware, the specialist in compostable takeaway coffee cups, has devised a new version of disposable food-preparation gloves - they are made from cornstarch PLA, and after use they can go for food waste recycling.

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One of London's best-regarded independent coffee houses has opened a new site in a monument to corporate business.

Notes, which originally made its name as a combined music-and-coffee business, became known for its two stores in Trafalgar Square and Covent Garden - the striking feature of the business was racks of music CDs which could be bought beside the coffee and food.

The emphasis on the music side of the business has now eased, in accordance with the worldwide drop in sales of CD albums, but at the same time Notes has gained its licence to sell wine, which has become a major feature of its new site.

Notes has had mixed success with new sites - it is likely that two more London ones are on the way, but a project in Leeds was discontinued.

The new London site is in one of those places which the press loves to describe as 'prestige' locations - it is the ground floor of the 35-floor City Point skyscraper in Moorgate. In the words of the building managers, it is 'one of the internationally recognised statements of corporate influence... approached through a public square and two dramatic twelve-storey cathedral-like galleria'. The gigantic glass-and-metal structure has also been described as 'a cathedral to money'.

"It's a cathedral to legalism!" remarked Notes' co-founder Rob Robinson, referring to the number of law firms in the area, one of whom is City Point's 'anchor tenant'. "We were lucky to be invited here - the landlords decided that they wanted to do some-

Coffee in the cathedral to commerce



Fabio (left) and Rob

thing with the wasted space on the ground floor, and they asked an agent for advice. The agent said to go for a speciality coffee shop, and that Notes would be the best.

"What is really encouraging is that the people working in this place do want good coffee. Some of them clearly know their coffee already."

It is also quite clearly a 'prestige' site in that the entire City Point site exudes that feeling of 'corporate influence' - or, to put it another way, big business and big money. So it is not surprising that the Notes partners have combined the coffee-house business with an appropriate city-style wine bar. Not least, this differentiates them clearly from the Costa on the other side of the square.

How does Notes combine coffee and wine?

"They are two distinct businesses," remarks co-founder Fabio Ferreira.

"From the beginning, we wanted a coffee shop which could be open late, which people do appreciate. But, to make the evening trade work, we needed the wine."

Does this mean that baristas double as sommeliers?

"We are not so pretentious as to have sommeliers, but we do have different staff in the evenings, and we do make sure that we always have someone in the house who 'knows wine', just as we always have staff on who really 'know' coffee.

"We do try to make our wine list a bit more funky and different from the usual."

It is certainly different in the pricing, which is very much tailored to a city clientele - prices are up to £90 a bottle, though the vast majority are in the £20-£30 region, on a wine list which ranges from 'crisp' to 'zesty', and which features what the owners describe as an 'easy-going pluggable' section.

The coffee prices in Moorgate are interesting - in the modern fashion, there are no pound signs on the menu, just figures, and every coffee is £2 or over, £2.80 for a cappuccino, latte or flat white, £3.40 for a mocha, and every sit-in tea is £3.

The hot chocolate is £3.60, which surprised us, but we were gently reprimanded by Rob. "It's a bargain - this is expensive Montezuma dark chocolate, not a cheap powder full of sugar!"

One very notable feature of the new site, again in accord with what is happening in coffee houses elsewhere, is not just a new concentration on filter coffee, but the use of batch brewers in which coffee can be held for a reasonable amount of time in good condition.

"At first, nobody was confident about batch brewers," observes Fabio. "But then people started tasting the coffee and realised that you can get good results from these... and they can be fast.

"Everybody got excited about the 'proper' brew bars when they appeared, but they take so long to produce the drink. On a bulk-brew system, you don't spend five minutes on one drink - you spend five minutes on six litres, which makes far more sense. Our customers aren't in here to be lectured about the coffee, they want to get in, get it, and get out!"

"And then you keep it for a decent amount of time, although the first hour is crucial - that's because once you start taking coffee out, you leave more air inside, and the lower the coffee gets, the more the taste goes.

"To keep it simple, we are keeping just one filter coffee a day. We have

three or four available to us, but we don't want to have more than one on each day. Now, we find the customers coming in and saying 'what's the filter coffee today?'"

This coffee is now coming from Notes' own roastery, a relatively new development.

"We have wanted to roast since before we started Notes," explains Fabio. "But it can be very expensive, so we put it on the side until we got to a size where it was reasonable for us to move to roasting... when we did, we were able to reward the customers by bringing our prices down by 20p."



Soup of the day!

Will there be a wholesale route, for supplying other coffee houses?

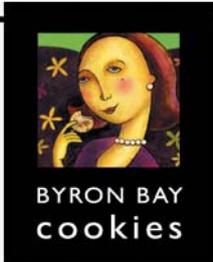
"I knew how to roast before Notes, but what was a bit scary was having to put it all together, because supplying all our shops was like getting loads of new customers at once. The idea of wholesaling to other coffee shops just happened organically - as soon as others saw us doing it, they came to us.

"Long before Notes, I said that roaster-retailing was going to happen in the UK sooner or later. We saw it in New Zealand and Australia, and I saw it in Brazil. London was really very slow in this, but I think it has been a good thing for more people to start roasting, because it has really opened up the speciality coffee market.

"Now, you can see that we are already years ahead of the general market, as most speciality roasters are. And now, when you see new catering companies into the coffee market, you can see that they look first to the new roasteries."



This 'caffeine response unit' is a service van from the Lifbergs coffee brand, spotted in north London.



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There has been a steady increase in specific coffee-themed festivals over the past six years. This autumn, we see remarkable support for Manchester's proposed Cup North, due at the beginning of November. There has also been a coffee event in Norwich.

Some coffee festivals achieve remarkable figures – when the Bath Coffee Festival was running, it drew over seven thousand visitors to each event, a figure which remains highly impressive. The London Coffee Festival has turned into a quite frantic event with something in the region of twenty thousand attending.

On the other hand, we have seen coffee events which remained more or less empty – notably, the regional heats of the barista championship were discontinued largely because so few people turned up.

What will make these events work? Is it a matter of luck, whether the public turn up to a coffee event? And what is a festival organiser's responsibility towards helping the exhibitors make a good showing and also a commercial success of their participation?

Some organisers think their duty ends at selling a stand space, and they couldn't give a damn what happens after that; others give 'promotional advice' which is primary school level stuff ('why not send out a press release?')

In many cases, the organisation leaves a lot to be desired, agrees Richard Norman of Mad About Coffee in Norfolk, who has both run events and been an exhibitor.

"The things you quickly find out about festivals and events is that they are stressful!

"The main problems generally tend to be about access, parking and hotels, closely followed by 'services'. A great benefit to an organiser is to be regarded as fair on your costs. It makes me laugh to be quoted £300 for a power point at a big show – what's that all about? Realistically, to run power to a stand is the cost of a safe cable... the power drawn by an espresso machine is not excessive.

"Think about what they want to achieve, and think about variety. Don't put two coffee companies side-by-side... better to put a coffee company next to a crepes company so they can work with each other."

This attitude goes down well with Yael Rose, who has a track record in chocolate events, and has run a series of tea and coffee festivals at the Southbank Centre, London. Because the event was held in a public space, the attendance was extremely high, but she agrees that organisers must put in effort to bring the public along.

"We have a huge responsibility in this to our exhibitors. We endeavour to keep our fingers on the pulse and speak to them about what they need, because their objectives can vary from marketing, to sampling, to simply

making sales, but everyone without fail wants to make a result. It is my responsibility to try and bring in as many of the the right type of visitors as possible."

So, with regard to bringing in visitors... how is this done? Organisers of small events aren't going to be spending thousands of their own money on advertising and promotion, and although their big exhibitors have the budget to help, big companies are often not good at doing anything practical. At the other end of the scale, the small artisan exhibitors have the interest but not the budget.

Television coverage only happens after an event, so that's no good for drawing people. Social media is often haphazard. Word-of-mouth is uncontrollable. Public relations companies are expensive and often ineffectual. Exhibitors themselves are often appalling at promoting their own appearance at an event.

How on earth do you draw people?

Currently, the daddy of all specialist local festivals is someone who is a perfectly good coffee barista, but whose main interest lies in a matching product – this is Paul Morris of the Chocolate Café in Ramsbottom, Lancashire, who created the town's chocolate festival. His attendance figures have gone through the roof, to approaching forty thousand over a weekend.

“ You do get very reputable businesses who are just not experienced at festivals, and they can make your event look like a school fete ”
- Paul Morris

In Paul's view, what is the organiser's responsibility to the trade that supports him?

"I think about this long and hard. It is clear to me that many event organisers get this wrong, very often. My role is not just about selling stands to all and sundry. It is about making it interesting so that the visitors will enjoy it enough to come back... or your traders certainly won't!

"So, the job is to find great-quality traders, with variety. Yes, you may start with a relatively tight theme, which in our case is chocolate, but that does not mean you have to have ten chocolatiers all making truffles or a dozen cupcake companies."

Even big-name exhibitors can get this wrong, he notes. So even big brands have to be vetted.

"Your event is perceived by what the traders do, and you really don't want to see exhibitors putting products on card-tables as if they're at a car-boot

Drawing the crowds

Everybody wants to run a coffee festival – but whose responsibility is it to get the public to attend?



Paul Morris

sale. And you do get very reputable businesses who are just not experienced at festival events, and they can make your event look like a school fete."

Then, what is his responsibility for drawing people in? He seems to be doing a better job of it than many festival organisers.

"What I see, a lot of times, is exhibition organisers trying to pitch their events to both consumers and to the trade... and it never works, because the two audiences want different things. Consumers want to buy, and the business-to-business visitors want to talk. If you try and be both, your

exhibitors don't know how to engage with their visitors – even at a 'trade day', they're not always sure who's standing in front of them.

"We concentrate on consumer visitors, and there are two benefits in this for exhibitors. One, it is a product showcase in front of the right type of visitor, and second, it is selling for cash... and you must understand that this is a principal interest on the day!

"When you have decided what your target audience is, even if you don't pay for advertising, you still have to put effort in to attract them. You can access a lot of free coverage in listings pages if you work at it, and you'll find your local tourist and 'visit England' agencies will put a lot of work in for you.

"With regard to social media, we do try to encourage people to tweet and blog about us and post pictures, but you can get too bogged down in it... you must appreciate that not every-

body communicates this way, and to put all your effort into social media is just to ignore eighty per cent of your potential customers.

"Social media is important – but only as one part of a mix."

One would superficially guess that it is diplomatic to make friends with local officers who can help smooth the way – the police, chamber of commerce, and so on. Few festival organisers seem to do this, but Paul Morris sees the value in it.

"This is absolutely critical. For our first years, we ran the event on our own, which was incredibly hard work. Then, for four years, the council came in, then the Ramsbottom Business Group, and this all opened up a vast amount of links... we wouldn't have had the practical help of the army cadets without that, and when we won an award for the festival, we were commended for bringing many local bodies together.

"The thing is to make sure that everybody who is involved knows why they're involved, and understand what they want. The marquee man probably wants his money and isn't interested in publicity; the police want to be seen to be involved in community participation."

However hard they try, organisers always receive complaints from exhibitors – the usual ones are about the cost of running water and electricity to stands, and about access arrangements for build-up and take-down, and about poor layout.

Paul Morris has heard all the complaints, and in turn has come up with some ideas which have been applauded by both his exhibitors and the town's traders.

"It must be pleasant to move about at a festival. To have to fight your way through crowds is no fun for anyone.

"So this year, we created a family space where they could sit down, catch their breath, and take five minutes to relax. We had an alfresco area, with street-food traders, with a shared space for sitting.

"This was a very good idea: the town's traders didn't mind, because they knew that all this made people stay in their town for longer. This kind of thinking is now key to our event.

"When you create spin-off opportunities for the entire town, and when it makes people say they will come back, then this encourages your town to have a positive view of what you're doing, and support you.

"It also means that our view is now listened to in the town, and we are listened to in our industry as well."

The owners of a pizza takeaway business in Burnley have said they want to open a unique coffee shop serving ethical and organic coffee and food to the people of Burnley. Pronto Pizza have said that a new business idea they have been thinking about for some years will involve ethically and locally-sourced coffees. Among the many comments made to the local paper was the sardonic one by a reader who said: "I was thinking of opening an ethical brothel, which is just what Burnley needs – all the women will be locally sourced."



Kaldi

In a quite bizarre story reported by the north-eastern press, Greggs is said to have promised to become a better neighbour to a Newcastle coffee shop whose external signage was damaged in what is alleged to have been deliberate sabotage. It is reported that the independent Pink Café's A-board was first moved away from its own shopfront to nearer a branch of Subway, and then was deliberately broken. A witness, writing on Twitter, has said that they saw staff from the chain café damage the A-board, and Greggs has reportedly apologised and promised to pay for any damage 'accidentally caused'.

A café owner in Stevenage first appeared in court in April, charged with selling out-of-date food, and deliberately altering the 'use by' date on items served to customers. The case was put back to this month, but the court would not hear it, and adjourned it until November. Why would the court not hear it? Because the paperwork was out of date...

Drinking four or five cups of coffee a day may protect against tinnitus, the ailment of a constant ringing in the ears. Research published in the *Journal of Medicine* tracked 5,289 cases of the ear buzzing, and then

reported: "we observed a significant inverse association between caffeine intake and the incidence of tinnitus." This is the exact opposite of much previous research, which has recommended that sufferers avoid coffee. Perhaps the most realistic pronouncement on the subject is from a third set of health researchers who said they found that caffeine had no effect on tinnitus severity – but that being told to abstain from coffee had really annoyed the sufferers!

The press in Newcastle has had some fun reporting the Hip Cat Coffee shop, which has said it will sell only three coffees – flat white, Americano, or filter. The owner has commented: "if you want a tepid pint of coffee-flavoured milkshake there's a million Costas... too much choice equals queueing and eye-rolling, and that's what we're trying to avoid."

The legalisation of recreational marijuana in Washington, USA, has been very quickly followed by a range of pot-infused ready-to-drink coffee. The founder of the Mirth Provisions company says his biggest problem has been measuring the ideal dosage of the major ingredient – it turns out that 20mg of marijuana is reckoned to

be the ideal amount to enhance a coffee without undesirable after-effects.

A particularly incompetent Chinese rogue is facing ten years in prison for getting a tea theft completely wrong. He stole 30,000 bottles of iced tea, but quite unaccountably did not attempt to sell them through any blackmarket catering route – he decided that if he emptied them all out, he could sell the glass to a recycling business. It took him all night to pour the tea away, and then he sold the bottles to a scrap dealer for \$20. The dealer sold them on to a glass recycler for \$150. The incompetent thief who wasted thousands of dollars' worth of iced tea was arrested when police noticed a large pile of bottle-tops outside his door.

The supermarket chain Lidl has claimed that the concept of 'artisan' food is a fallacy, in that consumers are really unable to tell the difference. The supermarket built what was supposed to be a farmers' market in the East End of London and filmed the reaction of customers, who commented on the good value of such fresh produce – which actually came from Lidl. The brand proposes to use the footage in a TV commercial.



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