



## Caffe Nero used as a punchball for activists, politicians and daily columnists

Caffe Nero was surprised to find itself at the centre of a short-lived media frenzy last month when animal activists suddenly accused the chain of being in favour of badger culls, and threatened to stage protests outside the chain's cafes. However, as the row rumbled on for over a week, the possibility began to emerge that the chain had become an unwitting five-days-wonder punchball for those who simply wanted to get themselves some attention.

The problem was begun by anti-cull activists, working on a rather loose logic for starting an argument.

When the chain took action to protect itself, it then came under fire from the other side, with newspaper columnists calling the chain 'pathetic' for giving in, and even the National Farmers' Union reportedly spoke up criticising the business.

The origin of the complaint was rather odd. An animal-rights group had decided to find out which large coffee chains bought milk from the areas in which badger culls are to proceed this autumn; they then, with perhaps a rather large stretch of imagination, concluded that any such chains are therefore in favour of badger culls.

A Facebook page called 'Stop the Cull' was set up, with a map showing the locations of Caffe Nero shops in London, and leaflets were printed with the perhaps-illogical allegation that 'Caffe Nero thinks it's OK to buy milk



*The activists' rather polite response (above) would have ended the matter, had so many others not seen the chance for attention...*

tainted with badger blood, we intend to make sure the rest of the UK knows about it'.

This came as something of a surprise to Nero's chairman Gerry Ford, who told us that he had no connection with badger activity on either side of the argument, and that perhaps two per cent of his supplies came from relevant areas... but he said that if public opinion on the matter was so strong, then he would source that milk elsewhere.

This decision provoked several baffling responses. The animal-rights group quite politely issued a statement on social media asking its supporters to thank Caffe Nero for taking the matter seriously. By contrast, an opinion columnist on a daily newspaper, whose job it is to stoke up outrage, criticised Gerry Ford for his 'craven surrender', and for being 'pathetic' in 'buckling' to the 'great unwashed'.

And then, it was alleged elsewhere, the National Farmers' Union called the chain 'arrogant and ignorant', and called for farmers to boycott it. The Department for Environment,

Food and Rural Affairs said: "it is wholly unacceptable to intimidate and threaten retailers in this way".

A question was asked in Parliament by the MP for Bridgwater and West Somerset, who wants a debate on the problem of companies coming under pressure from activists. Almost incredibly, the leader of the House of Commons replied that Nero's decision was "utterly unacceptable", had damaged the livelihood of people unconnected to the row... and then congratulated Caffe Nero for reversing its decision. Nero said it had not reversed its decision at all.

Curiously, nobody thought to suggest that any operator of any café, big or small, has a perfect right to source his supplies from wherever he chooses, irrespective of the politics or opinions of anyone else. As it happens, Nero told us, it has no opinions on the matter of badgers.

"We are at a loss as to why our stores have been the target, when we are not part of the debate," said Nero. "We have long-standing relationships with farmers throughout the UK, and we will continue to be supportive of the NFU.

"However, as a first priority we must guarantee the safety of our people and customers, and in response to serious and credible threats against our team members, we have taken a pragmatic decision."

### INSIDE

*Inside our first all-digital issue – features on Puccino's, Edgcomb's, and the Coffee in Good Spirits contest. Fairtrade comes under fire again, and there is a suggestion that Direct Trading is unethical!*

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# World research says arabica is now in danger

The new annual report from World Coffee Research begins with an attention-getting statement – the body says that following its research on the genetics of coffee, the Arabica species 'is highly unlikely to possess the magnitude of genetic diversity the industry needs in order to face the new constraints of the 21st century'.

This is not the first time that there has been a scare over the future of coffee - a few years ago, there was worldwide media interest in a suggestion that climate change and disease could render coffee extinct by 2050. This new research, by a dedicated industry body, does not offer quite such an apocalyptic scenario, but does produce some surprising findings.

Perhaps the most surprising is that coffee, the second-largest traded commodity in the world, has up to now had no central seed industry with which to keep the world stocks going... and this at a time when the world's plantations are at a critical point in farm renovation, with forty per cent of all coffee plants now sufficiently old to require replanting in the next five years.

Against this, the World Coffee Research does place the results of its recent work, which makes the situation look considerably better.

It has created a Coffee Variety Intelligence project, a massive undertaking which collects

and catalogues seed stocks in producing countries with a view to making available seeds and young plants of guaranteed quality. A great problem, says WCR, is that many farmers have only had access to poor quality plants and seeds, often having to buy from unreliable sources.

Putting this together with its work on coffee genetics effectively means that there is now a chance of a worldwide strategy which puts the best-quality plants in the places where they can survive and produce the best harvests. In one recent project, WCR distributed 135,000 seedlings of the best-performing varieties to farmers in twelve countries.

The WCR has also been working on a programme to counter the effects of leaf rust, and is working on rebuilding coffee production in areas which have been very seriously hit - five new rust-resistant varieties from other countries have been distributed, and their performance will soon be known. Work is also going on to identify 'genetic clues' which will help the

industry identify varieties which will respond best to the threat of climate change.

Without this kind of work, says WCR, the worldwide coffee industry might face potentially disastrous situations as bad as the Irish potato famine and the disastrous grape blight which once struck the French wine industry.

On the other hand, says the organisation, the work with improved plants is also supported by the potential of 'new origins', or a wider number of areas in which coffee can be grown.

Meanwhile, similar work is going on with regard to tea, in the world's three biggest producing regions. Researchers in China, India and East Africa are working to find out what climate change is going to do to tea crops - typically, rainfall studies suggest that tea production in East Africa could fall by 55 per cent over the next thirty years. Many plantations in China have already changed their methods to prevent a mass die-off of plants due to recent heatwaves.

## Kimbo says its work with Jamie Oliver takes the brand to a new level

**The experience of installing machines and training across the entire chain of Jamie's Italian restaurants has given the Kimbo coffee brand a new level of confidence, says UK managing director Angus McKenzie. The Neapolitan coffee brand has recently done several large projects across pub chain estates, and has now finished equipping 43 Jamie's sites with coffee, San Remo and La Cimbali machines, and has trained 600 of the group's staff.**

"We have now got to the stage," Angus McKenzie told Coffee House, "that people in the trade are no longer saying - Kimbo? Who?"

The contract with Jamie's Italian came from the chef's own family.

"It's a small world. Jamie Oliver's brother in law is from Naples, and he said that Kimbo is the local choice there. So Jamie's people got in touch, and they said yes, this is good coffee, but we have a very big operation, and this is no small job... do you think are you going to be able to handle it?"

"We did a belt-and-braces job on everything - as an example, Jamie has three locations airside and one landside at Gatwick, and while we were fitting out these locations at 2am, which is the way you have to work on these sites, we had a van full of every conceivable spare equipment waiting outside!"



*The Kimbo espresso glasses remind chef Gennaro Contaldo of his childhood in the Naples area*

"But there comes a point in a contract like this where you think - 'yes, we really can work at this level', and that does a lot for your confidence. As a brand, we are now absolutely confident about what we can do on a national level."

Kimbo has been sufficiently impressed by Jamie Oliver's staff to be preparing an in-house incentive.

"The first thing a new member of staff is introduced to at Jamie's is the concept of quality as the foundation of everything, and the importance of freshness in things like pasta being made every day.

"Based on quality audits, we shall now run an in-house contest for a trip with us to Italy - and not just for the baristas, but for all the floor staff, who are the ones who actively sell our coffee. One of the very good things about Jamie's is that there is a good relationship between the different staffs, and they work together very well."

The chef Gennaro Contaldo, a senior player

in Jamie's Italian, tells us that he already knew of Kimbo coffee from his home on the Amalfi coast.

"I grew up with the taste of this coffee, and when I heard it was coming to Jamie's, I said 'hallelujah!' I used to roast coffee myself as a young boy - I used to roast in hot ashes, and had to bend down very close to hear the crack, which was difficult. We used pack into jars and close them straight away. We had to grind by hand, and not go too fast, so as not to burn the beans, and the water had to be spring water. As we had no central heating or microwaves in those days, we even invented a kind of bain-marie to keep coffee hot.

"And our coffee was always served in a glass, which is why the Kimbo glass cups remind me of those days. Only on special occasions did the china cups come out!"

There is an unusual feature to the new Kimbo Coffee Embassy, which is sited in the Caffè Caldesi business in Marylebone, London. Here, coffee is served in the Cuccuma, the traditional Neapolitan 'flip pot'.

This is an unusual process which involves something slightly similar to a Moka pot, except that the key to the brewing operation is that when the brew water starts steaming, the whole pot is quickly flipped upside down, with the result that the water passes down through the grounds and the filter.

# Scots tea-farmers get organised



*A selection box of Scots-grown teas, as presented to the President*

**Although it is not so long since British-grown tea was considered a novelty, the domestic plantation industry is now big enough for the Scots to have created their own association of tea farmers, which has just won a development grant of £50,000 in the Scottish Edge funding awards.**

It has been widely reported that conditions in several parts of the UK are perfectly good enough for tea plants – the Tregothnan estate in Cornwall has already said that its micro-climate is remarkably similar to that of Darjeeling, and the Wee Tea Plantation of Perthshire has said that contrary to what most people might think, both the highland and lowland areas of Scotland are hospitable to tea plants.

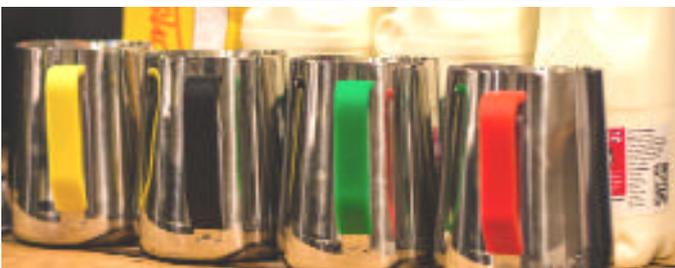
The Scottish tea industry has now developed to the degree that when their first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, was in America this month, she went to one top-class hotel where Scottish tea was being served, and also arranged for a selection box of Scottish teas to be delivered to the president at the White House.

There are twelve members of the Tea Growers Association, says Tam O'Brann of the Wee Tea Plantation.

"Nearly all are professional growers – market gardeners, arable farmers, and crofters, etc. Some of them already have tea on the market, some have yet to work up to a big enough crop."

The plantations are spread widely – his Dalreoch is the biggest, but there are others in Dumfries, in Dundee, and even on the Isle of Mull.

"We are about to bring the products to London in a big way next month, but we are ready to speak to all concerned with serving good quality teas grown in the UK."



There have been several attempts to find an easy way for café operators to distinguish between the different milks they are using, and a new idea has come up from Coffee Hit. This is a Rhinoware product, a new range of coloured silicon sleeves for milk pitchers. According to Paul Radin of Coffee Hit, consumer demand for different kinds of milk is increasing, which means that a barista needs to immediately be able to tell the full-fat milk from the non-dairy. The sleeves are available in five different colours and are suitable for three different milk pitcher sizes. They were previewed at the London Coffee Festival, and aroused sufficient interest for Coffee Hit to be introducing them soon.

A gluten-free coffee shop in Reading has been nominated for a retail award. The Nisby's café was opened by a gluten-intolerant person who knew the problems of others with the condition. She says that after nine months, business results show that there is a vast market of people who have such conditions which need to be catered for.

A plan has been put in place to overcome the awkward situation of the Darkroom coffee shop in Swindon, whose co-owner has been told by the Home Office to leave the country, in spite of a petition in her favour. Darkroom's co-owner Jacky Collyer is Australian, and due to immigration rules has been required to leave the UK because she and her husband did not meet the minimum income threshold for sponsoring a non-EU spouse to stay in the country. The Darkroom has now come to an arrangement with the Brew café of Oxford, who will keep the Swindon business open.

David Cooper, who founded the Coopers Coffee business now owned by UCC, and who also owns a coffee house in Huddersfield and another coffee-supply business, has now become a director of a mobile coffee operation - he has taken a stake in Go-Go Gaggia, which was founded by Jocelyn Lodge and operates from Smart cars. The business was begun four years ago and is franchised to four other operators; it is reported that their plan is to rename the business Go-Go Coffee and appear at a national franchise exhibition, with a view to expanding to around twenty local operations by the end of next year.

The mayor of Liverpool has visited the local Joe Black Coffee company to mark its 60th year of roasting coffee. The business reports major growth in the past year, nearly doubling in size.

Coffee#1 has now opened its 51st cafe, in Stroud, with the result that there have now been questions over the number of coffee shops in the town. It has been estimated that Stroud now has twenty coffee shops, with more to come this year. A spokesman for the council remarked that "we are seeing how the high streets are changing - leisure is now as important as retail."

The 'scores on the doors' hygiene ratings are not popular with many café owners, and Costa was displeased with them recently when a Grimsby site was rated at only one star, which signifies 'major improvement necessary'. Following enquiries from customers, the site manager has complained, pointing out that it received a five-star rating three months ago - the local council has removed the low rating for investigation. Caffe Nero also suffered a zero-rating, in Cheltenham, over alleged 'poor hand-washing technique, dirty floors, poor lighting and (reportedly) staff changing being done in an office with CCTV'. Two other businesses in the area also got a zero rating, which rather supports the view expressed by some café owners, that some regional inspectors regularly score too severely as a matter of habit.

Costa has recently opened in Mildenhall, and has applied for change-of-use permission for a shop in Redcar.

The Independent Coffee Trader café in Tiverton, which closed at the end of April, has been re-opened by a new mother-and-daughter team. The daughter had worked for the previous owners for two years. In the same county, Independent Exeter coffee shop Devon Coffee has acquired the former premises of a local florists to create a new roaster-retail shop, with the roaster open to public view. The founder says 'there isn't anything like it in Exeter at the moment'.

Another coffee shop owner has turned to artisan bakery - Andy Walsh of the Coffee Kitchen in Cockermonth is expanding by taking on the lease of two adjoining shops. He has told the local press that bakery was always part of his plan, and that he already cannot cope with demand for bread and cakes - he hopes to have his new bakery open by August. In Staffordshire, David Wiggins of Cappuccino Rapido has also recently opened his own artisan bakery.



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# Allegra's 'house of coffee'

The Allegra organisation, which is already behind the London Coffee Festival, has come up with a plan for another event. This is The House of Coffee & Co, which is to be held at Victoria House in London in early November.

We confess to being slightly unclear about the idea, in which 'visitors will be taken on a voyage of discovery through five experiential galleries that represent the coffee journey'.

"Our festival visitors now understand more about the different coffee processes and how origin, roast profile and brewing method affect the taste of coffee, so we wanted to create an event that allows them to take their existing knowledge to the next level," Allegra's Ludovic Rossignol told us.

"Put in plain English, what makes The House of Coffee & Co unique is that it offers an interactive experience which presents the coffee bean journey. As visitors progress through the different galleries, they will discover coffee stories through intimate, informal workshops and demonstrations, plus individual discussions by the people that transform this tasteless green bean into what we sip every day.

"The idea is to create a progressive and rich content-driven experience where quality one-to-one discussions and tasting experiences are delivered meticulously by our collaborators (these are exhibitors). What makes the House of Coffee & Co even more different to other coffee events is that those coffee experiences are presented in an environment which fuses the sophistication of a well-curated art gallery, the edible pleasure of a tasting menu, and the learnings from a great keynote speech."

The attendance at Allegra's London Coffee Festival, was, we are told, 'more than 23,642'. The attendance on the trade days was 9,861.



## North Star raise cash for Roxanne's successor

The North Star artisan roastery of Leeds has just made its crowdfunding target, achieving the £20,000 needed for a new roaster, with about twelve hours to spare. North Star is only 18 months old, but founders Alex Kragiopoulos and Ellis Hall report that business is already too much for their existing machine to handle. "We have worked hard to build up great relationships with some independent businesses in the Leeds area and now across the UK. We have now reached a stage where our current 5-kilo roaster, Roxanne, just can't keep up with the demand. We can't continue as we are for much longer as we are almost at capacity.

"We plan to keep our existing roaster if we can for smaller production runs and limited edition blends."

It is customary for Kickstarter investors to be given gifts or rewards on a scale proportionate to their investment. North Star is generally offering brewing and roasting courses, and investors will be named on a 'wall of fame'... but anyone investing five thousand pounds gets to name the new roaster!



There is a rather entertaining development after the recent fuss about the flat white being introduced to America, to the astonishment of millions of coffee drinkers there who had never heard of it. Starbucks branches in New York, San Francisco and Seattle (of all places) have now removed the cappuccino from their menus, apparently having replaced it with the flat white. In rather typical Starbucks fashion, the chain has noted that the flat white is 'traditionally a ten-ounce coffee...', a description which might upset some purists.

According to the local TV news in Seattle, the city which is seen as a world capital of coffee now has its first Coffee Sommelier. He is the wine director of a local restaurant, and the distinction was bestowed on him by... Nespresso.

Costa has created what the advertising industry says is a unique campaign using 'lenticular technology'. This, we are told, is a printing technique which creates the illusion of movement. (Very simplistically, it involves using several images laid on top of each other, with a layer of refracting lenses on top... viewed from different angles, such as the viewpoint of a person walking past a sign, it gives the impression of a changing image). The new Costa project encourages consumers to try coffee shaken over ice. As the public walk past the displays, they see what appears to be a cup being shaken. The campaign has been sited at 500 StreetTalk kiosks near Costa branches.

An independent coffee house in Brighton has been burgled less than a week after opening. The Forgetful Cat lost £300 and an iPad, but the owner says she was overwhelmed by the support from local residents and traders, which 'made her feel part of the community', which she thought more important than the cash lost.

We are now allowed to say that Andrew Bowen of Java and Co cafes in Oxfordshire is writing a book - about how to run a coffee house. There have been dozens of these over the years, of course, but unlike some writers of how-to books, Andrew is one of the qualified few who has been through the experience himself. "This is a book about our years in the business," he told us, "and we have started the Café Success Hub website as a resource for the nitty-gritty. This is the resource which is going to address those tricky things that you have to do... like staff rotas." Typical content, we are told, will include discussions such as 'what can coffee shops learn from pubs?' Likely publishing date is October.



The Brewista Smart Scale has arrived on the British market, introduced by Coffee Hit. This is promoted as the first scale that automatically starts a timer as soon as the liquid hits the glass, and tares both time and scale once the cup or glass is removed from it. Brewista is a collaboration of engineers, designers, and various members of the hot beverage industry. Paul Radin, founder of Coffee Hit, has called the new item 'a barista's dream', and says: "weighing and timing are critical factors in the process of good coffee, and this takes away the headache of ensuring the correct amounts of coffee and water." The Smart Scale is priced at £40.00.

# Anti-poverty MP picks coffee shops as his target

**A member of parliament has accused coffee shops of profiting from 'poverty wages', after he conducted his own survey and concluded that none of the high street coffee chains are paying the Living Wage.**

Frank Field, MP for Birkenhead, wrote to 13 high street chains, asking them to detail their pay policies. Less than half of them replied, and those who did confirmed only that they met their legal obligation to pay the national minimum wage of £6.50 an hour for staff aged 21 and over.

None told him that they pay the Living Wage, which is a different calculation, assessed at the amount someone needs to cover basic living costs. This is currently rated at £9.15 an hour in London and at £7.85 elsewhere.

Costa said its parent company was in discussion with the Living Wage Foundation.

Frank Field told the press that major companies who can afford to pay a higher minimum wage should be forced to do so by the Low Pay Commission. He added: "why not begin with the multinational coffee shops? Pressure should be put on them." (The government are of course planning to reform tax credits so that taxpayers are not subsidising low wages paid by mean employers.)

His comments were not universally well received.

Mike Haggerton of Habitat in Aberfeldy pointed out that independent coffee shops are in an entirely different position - he told us: "I would love to pay the official living wage. We pay above the minimum wage and try to push upwards, and as the owner, I am the lowest paid in my own business.

"If MPs want to help pay staff higher, which I'd love, then fix VAT lower on hospitality - twenty per cent kills us, and it should be five per cent. How many customers know that 60p from every latte they buy from us goes directly to the VATman?"

Frank Field himself told us: "Once it became clear to Britain's Premier League football clubs that they had ample capacity to afford a Living Wage for their lowest paid staff, without it costing jobs, they each signed a voluntary agreement setting out the first steps to do so. Might Britain's largest coffee retailers now follow suit and agree the first moves towards paying all of their staff enough to live on?"

## Spanish coffee brand launches in UK

**Another coffee name which is big on the continent has made its appearance in the UK. Following the recent arrival of Cafes Richard from France, we now have Cafes Novell from Spain, which is being brought in through a new company in Yorkshire.**

Phil White, managing director of the ScarNov Coffee Group, tells us that a major part of his offer concerns support for café owners.

"The UK offers enough room for another international brand. When we assessed the market, we saw very little, if any, true customer service to clients - most coffee companies sell the coffee and never see the clients. This is not the way of Cafes Novell.

"The main difference between us and the rest of the UK coffee industry is that we work closely with our clients to make sure the coffee is being served in perfect condition. What we have seen is that coffee companies very rarely visit the client to make sure the coffee is being served correctly.

"Coffee shops are now one of the more successful retail operations, and this combined with the relatively low set-up costs has encouraged people with no industry knowledge to set up as selling speciality coffee. The issues arise when they do not understand the technical aspects behind the preparation of espresso, so we provide controls to ensure their coffee is correct, and also help reduce the clients' coffee spend."

Cafes Novell is also active in the capsule

sector, with two products. The brand has its own form of capsule for its own machine, and is about to launch a Nespresso-compatible, with a difference - its capsule features a seven-gramme shot, which it believes superior to the Nespresso shot.



At a TED conference some time ago, a speaker said that "One day of the extra energy used from overfilling electric kettles is enough to light all the streetlights in England for a night." This has been recalled with the introduction of the new Kettle Rod - the idea is to put a mug on the device, and heat only one cup worth of water at a time. The device was put up for crowdfunding on Kickstarter, and raised investment worth £235,000, over double what was sought.

**Cafeology has won a Guardian Sustainable Business award for its bird-friendly coffee.**

The Guardian judges commented that Cafeology has gone 'above and beyond' to protect what is known as 'natural capital' (the world's stock of natural resources) saying that its bio-diversity and soil protection activities are real examples of how individual coffee companies can set an example for the whole industry. The coffee began by selling only through the RSPB, but was to be made available to foodservice. "It is still early days, but we are working with many existing customers on retail, farm shops, garden centres, etc.," says Cafeology's Bryan Unkles. "We have also found demand for the out-of-home market gaining momentum. Since our award, we have seen significant interest in the coffee and have also opened dialogues with a significant high street retailer."



**There has been an interesting aspect of the new and well-reported Caffix café in London, which has attracted much media interest by pricing everything at one pound. A sandwich board outside reads: 'porridge, yoghurt pots, pastries, great coffee, £1 always', and rather predictably, the media have been queuing up to send their reporters in to the business to see what they can buy, and interviewing other customers.**

Several patrons told the media that in the Fitzrovia area, they usually pay £6-7 for a takeaway lunch, and that they turned to Caffix because of the prices - but one customer gave a possible clue to the success of the business when he pointed out that he had been tempted by so many items at a low price each that in total he had ended up spending more than usual.

Another curious aspect of the business has been glossed over in the general media, with passing references to 'they make their own tea-bags'. When we queried this with Caffix' Joe Caye, he confirmed it - the business uses Suki loose teas, but the Caffix team actually do put these into individual tea-bags for takeaway service.



A thief who stole the tip jar from a Costa branch in Ipswich has been told to pay the café compensation, of the amount thought to be in the jar. The ruling was by magistrates, who also fined the thief £65.

The Jacaranda, the coffee bar in Liverpool where the Beatles began, is to re-open as a combined coffee shop and vinyl record store, with live music in the evenings.



# Is there a skills gap in coffee training?

There is an unusual aspect to the latest barista training scheme aimed at offering unemployed youngsters the chance to find their way into a job. This scheme is said to be the first of its kind in the country, and bears the impressive name of **The Professional Barista Apprenticeship in Speciality Coffee**.

It has been set up by the One Church Brighton community project, working with Taylor Street Baristas and Small Batch Coffee. Part of charity One Church's base in Gloucester Place has been turned into a barista school, in which ten apprentices get weekly practical training for the one-year course. They spend the rest of the week on placement at nine cafes.

The unusual aspect of this is a comment made by Andrew Tolley, co-founder of Taylor St. Baristas, who has said: "we have a skills gap in the speciality coffee sector that no colleges are currently able to fill. The cafes have the knowledge and expertise, but training is expensive. The apprenticeship aims to fill that gap... it encompasses all the skills that are the foundation to a career in coffee, is an opportunity to join the most dynamic and exciting part of the coffee industry, and is accessible to everyone."

The curious aspect of this is the suggestion that there is insufficient training in the coffee sector. We put it to Andrew Tolley that the industry is overflowing with barista training courses.

"This is a professional barista apprenticeship in speciality coffee," he replied. "There is a VRQ course in barista skills, but that is basic. We wanted to create an apprenticeship whereby a graduate could walk into any of the best cafes in the world and be able work alongside their baristas. This course covers in-depth barista skills, sensory skills, brewing, and customer service. They are certified to professional level in the SCAE barista diploma system and intermediate-level brewing.

The project development manager is Ben Szobody, who told us:

"The coffee industry is really splitting in two directions – bang-it-out coffee on the one side, and speciality coffee on the other. The chains are working the commodity side, while the speciality guys are taking cues from wine and craft beer.

"So although there are barista programmes, there's really nothing for the speciality side of the industry - everyone is training in-house, at considerable expense. This is the only public training scheme that remains accessible to the unemployed, while training sufficiently for the speciality sector."

**In the other big training scheme of recent days, the London social enterprise We Walk the Line has applied for crowdfunding investment to support its idea of launching people into self-employment through the use of coffee bikes, as made by Velopresso. (The trike in which the grinder is pedal-powered).**

We Walk The Line, which is a finalist in the Ben & Jerry's social enterprise competition, provides initial employment and then mentoring and assistance in running a

coffee trike, and when trainees are ready to run their own coffee business, profits are reinvested to set them up as part of a social franchise. The big problem, says the cause, is that half of young people complain that not having enough money prevents them from setting up in business, and a third of them say that having a mentor would make them likely to try self-employment.



*The Velopresso at a corporate event*

The cause has already bought one Velopresso, and is looking to raise £20,000, which will support more equipment and training.

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# How many of the UK population are really likely to be coffee customers?

The dangers of 'research' in the hot beverage trade has arisen again, with an extremely interesting bit of work from the Huhtamaki cup company. According to Huhtamaki, their research 'shows that 80 per cent of the UK population purchase takeaway hot drinks', and furthermore, that 85 per cent of consumers want outlets to use compostable takeaway cups, and that half of consumers would pay more for such cups.

We made no apology for querying this, recalling the much-derided Starbucks research of a few years back, in which it was suggested, ludicrously, that twenty million people visit a coffee shop every week. In this case, we protested, Huhtamaki could not seriously suggest that of a population of 64 million, 52 million people buy takeaway beverages. What they really meant, we suggested, was that 80 per cent of those they asked, a sample of 2,000 people, has bought a takeaway hot drink.

"The question was 'do you buy takeaway hot drinks?', and of 2,556 people, 2,022 said 'yes' and 534 said 'no'," came the response. "This is where the 80 per cent figure comes from. So, what we are saying is that if you apply that to the 52 million adults over 18 years old, you get a figure of approximately 41.2m consumers who have bought a takeaway hot drink away from home."

This is still actually bigger than the UK's

'economically active' population.

However, other parts of the Huhtamaki work have certainly brought up some interesting and useful figures.

It is suggested that approximately six million consumers visit a coffee shop once a week or more, which is certainly a much more realistic and credible figure than Starbucks' idea of twenty million.

Similarly, the suggestion that 85 per cent of consumers want takeaway cafes to serve in compostable takeaway cups is again perfectly reasonable. If consumers had stated this preference without being prompted, it would be sensational information – but this turns out to have been a straightforward question, achieving the expected response.

Had Huhtamaki asked the follow-up question 'where are you going to put the cup when it's finished?', we might have made big strides towards the longest-standing unanswered

problem of all... but it is probably far too big a question to have expected an answer.

An equally astonishing suggestion is that 63 per cent of customers have a preference as to the types of messaging they want to see on takeaway cups. Two-fifths of consumers want to see messages relating to the provenance of ingredients and the ethical sourcing of materials used to make the disposable cup. (Astonishingly, sixteen per cent want a 'state of mind' message telling them to sip their beverage or enjoy it!)

This, of course, may be a very worthwhile finding. Cup companies have been saying for years that too many coffee retailers miss the chance of using their cups as a promotional medium, and the finding that most consumers welcome interesting information on cups may inspire more café owners to think about how they use their cups creatively.

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## HSE says it will consult the trade – one day

Almost six years after the event which caused its investigation, the Health and Safety Executive has now agreed to consult the coffee trade when it issues its guidance to the catering industry on the subject of espresso machine safety. But that may still be a long way off.

It was the Sainsbury's explosion which brought the matter of espresso machine inspection and testing to wide attention, and readers will know that this magazine has been persistent in trying to get the HSE to say something on the matter, and that we have already invoked the Freedom of Information Act, and eventually had a request passed to the relevant Secretary of State, in an effort to push the authority into action.

We have now been told: "we are currently developing a proposal for research into espresso machines and café boilers, as part of a larger project into how best to manage the risks from smaller types of pressure equipment used in the workplace. It is proposed that the results of this research will form the basis of our guidance to the industry. This will take some time, though."

The HSE has also referred to another of our complaints, and noted that "the contents of any guidance will be written in an understandable way... this is the case for all new guidance."

We have, at the HSE's request, again helped with introductions to relevant members of the trade.

One of the prime movers in this matter has been Louie Salvoni of Espresso Service, who remarked:

"Why, when urgent direction is required with something so potentially dangerous, as proven by the Sainsbury's' incident, do the HSE act as if this won't happen again in their lifetimes? I note that they are 'developing a proposal for research', so we have to wait for the proposal, then the research, then the conclusion, then the directive. No worries - plenty of time chaps, just fingers crossed about no more explosions!

"At the very least they might issue a statement on the legal requirement and importance of inspections."

In this regard, there has been a disturbing report from the East of England alleging that some caterers have been told that the HSE has already changed its rules on pressure vessel requirements - it has not.



An inventor who was annoyed at the amount of grounds left in the bottom of his cup by cafetieres has created the Fellow Duo Coffee Steeper, which removes all grounds from the brewed coffee. All ground coffee goes in an upper chamber, and a twist mechanism allows the brewed liquor to pass into a lower chamber, going through a secondary finer filter. It costs \$85.

## Esquires coffee house chooses 'educational' area for kids over 'play' area



The Esquires chain has made a big thing of the children's area in its latest opening in Northern Ireland. A space of about 1,000sq.ft. has been given to a 'kids educational area', with i-Pads all programmed with Montessori games and books chosen for their educational themes. The chain has made the interesting remark that: "we see a distinction between a kids' play area and our kids' educational area."

"The area is best suited to children aged 2 to 9," manager Tony McVerry told us.

"We find the busiest times are at weekends when kids are off school... we are finding they are setting the agenda and bringing their parents in with them!

"Increasingly we are also seeing mothers coming in on weekday mornings with younger children after doing the school run for their older children.

"And interestingly, this area is also becoming very popular with children with special needs along with their carers. It can provide a relaxing respite while at the same time providing children with different activities that are both educational and fun. The carers generally come in at off-peak times because it is quieter and more relaxing, so this means the facility is getting good use at all times.

"While the tablets are loaded with pre-school software and approved educational apps, it is also very refreshing to see that the more traditional childrens' pastimes of colouring books, reading material, quiz games and jigsaws are equally popular.

"Taking in to account the overall budget for a 5,000 sq.ft. coffee house, the educational area was relatively inexpensive. Unquestionably, it is working extremely well, has exceeded our expectations, and we would certainly envisage incorporating this in future stores where space permits."

## Are cafes the best place for defibrillators?

Hannah Derby of Café Black in Stamford, Lincs, has begun an appeal to help raise £1,200 for a defibrillator in the town's high street. She approached the St John Ambulance organisation with the idea of raising money for equipment after attending a first aid course and being surprised to hear that the survival rates for people treated with the item are ten times that of those treated with CPR. She has told her local press that a town-centre café is the ideal place for such a facility, and proposes to have her staff trained accordingly.

"It has gone fantastically, she told us. "A group of ex-Round Tablers have committed to raising the whole amount, and we have also raised £400 in the shop so far, so I will be sharing with other retail premises in the town so they can start raising the money for a defib for their premises...the more the better!

"I think we could start a campaign nationally for every independent cafe to raise money to have their own defibs."

Europe's first branch of O' My Buns has opened in Leicester. This is a chain which is popular in both America and Asia, and specialises in sweet and savoury buns with a coffee glaze. The first British site has been opened by a franchisee who says that he discovered the business in Abu Dhabi, and "was mesmerised by the smell of fresh baked buns and coffee - a warm, relaxing aroma, more powerful than any aroma I've experienced in UK coffee houses. Once I had tasted a coffee bun, I was convinced this should be in the UK." He proposes to open in London, Manchester and Birmingham.

Sainsburys is due some praise for the way it responded to a complaint from a customer in one of its cafes. A heavily pregnant lady was seen bringing in a bottle of mineral water, and although she intended to order coffee, was told that she could not drink the water, which had not been bought on the premises. Often, in such cases, big corporations respond to the media with mealy-mouthed platitudes... in this case, Sainsbury's has made the admirably direct comment that: "this was clearly an error of judgement and an over-zealous interpretation of our policy that only food and drinks purchased in the café should be consumed there. We apologise for the offence caused, and will remind colleagues to use their common sense in the future."

Barista Brothers, the chain run by the one-time Coffee Republic CEO Steven Bartlett, has expanded by opening a new coffee house in Plymouth... in a site which was formerly occupied by Coffee Republic! The opening was attended by the mayor and several councillors, together with guests from the city's business community. It is one of several ex-Republic sites now being converted, Bartlett told us, adding that Barista Brothers is beginning to become a household name in the city.

Yorkshire Tea, which is an 'official partner' to the English test cricket team, has created an 'experiential test match campaign'. So far as we can gather, this involves the use of an Oculus Rift headset, which is a big name in 'virtual reality' gaming. The tea brand's idea is to invite spectators to wear the headset, which will give them the experience of facing a ball from England fast bowler Jimmy Anderson, which will appear to come at them at around 80mph. In another cricket promotion from the brand, former England captain Michael Vaughan will judge the best afternoon teas at local cricket clubs, and the winning club will have the chance to host a match against a team of 'legends'. The brand is also backing Rotherham United, and has claimed that since the tea began to be served at Leeds United, tea sales at that club doubled.

Tea bound for some of the biggest British retailers has been found to contain twelve times the accepted levels of pesticide residue, it has been alleged. The China Post reports that the country's Food and Drug Administration has been testing teas since an alert in April, and has now tested almost 1,000 tea samples. Around eight per cent of the samples failed to meet standards, it is reported - and this included tea intended for Harrod's.

Another beverage-related crowdfund project has raised over £100,000 from 73 investors, against a target of £180,000. This is Brew, which is described as a 'tea pub chain' - that is, a site with the feel of a pub, but serving 'serious tea'. The project involves some 'serious food entrepreneurs', and the Crowdcube offer puts 27 per cent of its equity up for investment. The chain proposes to offer work experience and job opportunities for ex-offenders. The idea has already been tested on a pop-up basis, and reports that the response was 'overwhelmingly positive'. Brew aims to establish a presence with two tea pubs in London, and move to franchising.

### FOR SALE

Two-year-old Toper Cafemino roaster. Training is available in Hackney, East London  
esther@theroastingshed.com 07973 431761



**It has not escaped anyone that the number of independent coffee roasteries in the UK has soared in recent years. It has also been a happy recent trend for several roasteries to adopt an 'open' design in which customers and clients can see through from a cafe area or training room and watch the roasting process going on.**

The latest to do so is a 'new' roaster with a thirty-year track record behind it – it is Edgumbes of Arundel, which made its name as a general supplier to the beverage trade, while also having a history of tea-blending. Until this year, it had no reputation for coffee roasting.

"We've always been tea blenders, and we started coffee roasting fifteen years ago on a small scale," managing director Alice Rendle told us. "Then we saw all the new fancy roasters and boutique tea brands popping up and we thought... 'hey, we already do all this!'"

It is, she acknowledges, a step in image for a well-known company to nudge its way in beside the modern-day 'artisan' operators. And yet, she argues, even a conventional trade wholesaler has to move with the times.

"As a wholesaler, we are seen as 'long-established and reputable'. We are well known in our area and among our target markets, which now includes a lot of London but has always been along the whole of the southern counties from Southampton to Hastings... unfortunately, if you drew a circle of our target area with the centre in Arundel, half of it would be in the sea.

"The reason our customers stay loyal to us is that we have always been open to new ideas - if we hadn't been so ready to move with the times, we'd have been dead and buried long ago. We embraced espresso very quickly in the early days, and we have always been innovative with our teas.

"It's all about a can-do attitude, and so the lesson is – always be prepared to look at something new."

In a typical example, Alice Rendle recently experimented, in a rather quiet and under-the-radar kind of way, the concept of online sales. It would not be entirely fair to describe this as a 'budget' selling operation, although it certainly did lean greatly towards 'competitive' prices, and she had to be careful about promoting it, for fear that her existing clients would wonder if she was selling cheaper to other customers.

As it turned out, everybody seems to have accepted that she had spotted a differentiation in her market. Having spent time considering the importance of 'service' in a wholesaler's business, she had recognised that there are several very different kinds of trade coffee customer, and that one single definition of 'service' does not fit them all – the full-service attitude needed to cater for the specialist tea-shop is entirely different from the attitude



## From tea blender to coffee roaster

There are 'new pretender' brands in both the tea and coffee worlds, says Alice Rendle of Edgumbes – but even her brand-new roastery has years of experience behind it

required for the hairdressing salon which lays on complimentary coffee for its customers. Essentially, there is no point in investing in several hours of latte art training for the office tea lady.

The result was her twin business of Coffee Etc.

"The online business was a good move, no question about it. Suppliers have no choice but to make themselves open to every route to market, and we are now very much in tune with all our routes, although we probably still haven't made enough of it.

"I wouldn't say that I have now positively learned about how to market online, but I do

accept that if you are going to do it, you have to do it properly... I do know that online, you can't just hope for customers to trip over you."

This is the opposite of what many of the trade's companies have said in the past – notably, several of our craft roasters, when asked how their online customers had found them, replied that they had no idea. They just took the orders and fulfilled them.

Not quite enough, says Alice Rendle.

"A lot of small online businesses think it's just about price. They forget that the service side of this kind of business is still key, and probably more important. The online customer doesn't have eyeball contact with the supplier,

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*I'm fed up with coffee roasters suggesting there's some need for secrecy and mystery about what they do – I want the customers to see what we do, because we know that it really does fascinate the public.*

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so what tells them they can trust you? It has to be assurance that they can feel comfortable that you will deliver, and that you are ready to be held to account for what you do.

"That's the joy of Amazon – if you post a complaint about a supplier, they're ready to play the cop."

The new roastery has been designed to serve both individual customers and act as a tasting and service area for trade clients.

"The roastery incorporates a takeaway café, not a sit-down one, except for a stool to perch on. And we sell both the coffee and the kit... and the kit is where we are seeing the big growth from home consumers. People do not like to feel silly, so they can see the value of good, simple brewers like the V60 and the Aeropress. We shall see more real growth in this area."

Do customers see into the roastery?

"This was always a big part of the idea. I'm fed up with coffee roasters suggesting there's some need for secrecy and mystery about what they do – I want the customers to see what we do, because we know that it really does fascinate the public.

"We have invested in a new roaster, from Giesen. The Giesen family are ten miles from the Probat factory, and at one time did a lot of the Probat tooling... then they decided they could do it all on their own, and turned out to be very good at it. They have the reputation for having done so much tooling for roasters in the past, and now they produce good solid machines.

"We previously roasted on a small Probat, and when you learn on a small machine, you really learn! We had been roasting on a very small scale for some time, first for family, then for cafes, and then suddenly we realised we were having to work at weekends."

Edgcumbe has decided against making a big thing of the 'artisan' tag. Alice Rendle knew exactly what she wanted to roast before she began.

"There is certainly a place for the geek roaster, and for the one-man-band. It is also true that there is a lot of stuff being churned out by some people which you really don't want to drink! However, if you're going to start poncing around talking about your 'notes of blueberry', then you may end up being stuck with that kind of business.

"I only take calculated risks... so I decided to get into roasting for the long term, and we



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*The really interesting brands in tea these days are the small ones, and the new pretenders... we're small, but we are not among the new ones. We've been doing this for years."*

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worked on the 'commercial' blend, which we had previously contracted out.

"We also worked to achieve a kick-ass flagship blend, and we got it - our Edge blend is a bloody delicious coffee. But we have also said to our trade customers that we understand the value of the old favourites for the high street cafes with a clientele of old ladies.

"A supplier must recognise what it is that makes money for the client. There is nothing wrong with suggesting that a trade customer tries something new, and yes, we'll be happy to suggest a café has a free kilo of essence-of-blueberry to see if they like it, but we still appreciate what it is that their customers want. And it's this attitude that means we now have more trade customers wanting to come in and talk to us about their coffee.

"We now have the blends with which we are happy, and when I was ready to transfer in-house a lot of the roasting work which we had previously contracted out, two things hap-

pened. Immediately, my new roaster began paying for itself, and very quickly I began to see people coming in - instead of me going out and saying 'please try my coffee', the customers were coming in and saying: 'what have you got?'"

In the new roastery, there are three people who roast.

"There's our roaster, and our barista, and our delivery driver... and believe me, he didn't want to do deliveries after he'd learned roasting!

"Me? Well, I love the whole idea, but I'm not interested in sitting around and geeking. My job is to waft in occasionally and 'approve'...!"

Although roasting is new to Edgcumbe, tea is not. Alice Rendle watches with interest the big rise in new boutique tea brands, some of whom use careful phrasing to give the impression that they actually do their own blending, and turns out to be exasperated by some of the players at both ends of the market.

"The tea industry is incredibly hidebound by its tradition, and by a pernicious reliance on the tea-bag market. There are many tea brands for whom the new interest in tea could mean death!

"The really interesting brands in tea these days are the small ones, and the new pretenders... we're small, but we are not among the new ones. We've been doing this for years."

The Edgcumbe house black tea is Rusper, a typically-English tea.

"We have always blended a good black tea for the English market – a 'nothing fancy' tea.

"It's true that a lot of people have not tasted 'good tea', and the difference between the quality of black tea blends is much the same as in coffee - it's the standard of the estate. A Darjeeling from one side of the mountain tastes different from one from the other side.

"Our good Assam/Kenyan blend, of which we sell loads, and which I drink at home, proves that there is a difference between a good quality black blend and a wishy-washy tea-bag.

"We do see the massive market for herbals and infusions, and we are buying in those products, because we don't believe we can be masters of everything... but in blending black teas, we certainly do know what we're doing.

"What turns us on in England is a good cup of builder's tea, and that's what we are very good at!"

## Boughton's Coffee House

is published by Ian Boughton and Trudi Roark  
The Old Farmyard, Mill Road, Dilham, North Walsham, Norfolk, NR28 9PU

01692 535660 07702 348866

ianb@coffee-house.org.uk

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Many of the most dramatic stories about coffee-bar chains concern those which are franchised businesses – over the years, several of them have had dramatic rises followed by equally notable disasters.

Some have managed to turn the situation around, and one of them is Puccino's.

The Puccino's crash of 2004 was absolutely spectacular. This chain had built itself up to around a hundred sites in only eight years, having started as coffee bars on railway station platforms and expanded into high-street locations, when this magazine reported that the founders of the chain had left the company at very short notice.

The Times, no less, reported later that year that the major shareholder, the Italian Zanetti organisation, was being threatened with legal action by the founders of the chain for failing to pay a seven-figure amount allegedly still due in respect of the 70 per cent holding it had bought two years previously.

Even now, the Times website carries the note that the majority of its story is blanked out 'subject to legal complaint'.

The Massimo Zanetti group went on to acquire Brodies, the Edinburgh coffee roaster which at the time was a £3 million company with 1,500 customers across the UK; at the time, Brodies managing director and major shareholder Ralph Lutton cheerfully told us that he had had no intention of selling his company, until he received an approach from Massimo Zanetti himself, who turned out to have tasted Brodies' products while touring Scotland. Zanetti already had interests across the full spectrum of the coffee trade, with estates in Brazil and Costa Rica, a green-bean trading company, a shipping company, several roasting interests, an espresso-machine brand, and hundreds of coffee bars around the world.

Zanetti persisted in trying to resolve Puccino's troubles for years, and eventually resolved them by putting the existing chain into administration and setting up a new company, Puccino's Worldwide, with Brodies' top man as one of the directors. The new company bought half of the existing cafes from the administrators, and effectively started over again.

Tony Brogden, the chief operating officer and board director, has been through the whole Puccino's story, and from both sides. He knows what life is like as a franchisee.

"I've been part of the brand since 2000 – I started as a franchisee, with two restaurants and a railway kiosk, in Windsor, Maidenhead, and Slough. We sold the restaurants, and I went to work with the brand as a project manager, opening new units.

"I genuinely don't know what happened... I expect it was probably a case of making the wrong decisions about site leases, which everybody else did at the time. Sometimes,

# In the dishwasher, nobody can hear you scream...

## The fall and rise of one of the very first 'quirky' coffee house chains



there is too much 'going for growth' at all costs.

"Anyway, the founders left the business, and it was not a happy time for the brand or those of us who stayed. I became operations director and I stayed with the brand as we muddled along to 2009, when it went into administration. The new owners had by now supported us for years, and couldn't keep on doing it.

"We came out as a brand bought by Brodies, who by that time had become owned by Zanetti, and we were tasked with turning the brand round. So we borrowed some money from Brodies, in a case of 'sink or

swim, boys'... and we paid it back within a year!"

What's the difference between the early Puccino's and the post-2009 Puccino's?

"The company had been firefighting for years. We looked at the business and asked ourselves what were our own fundamental problems, and we decided that they were insufficient control of brand standards and consistency of quality.

"My philosophy has always been about concentrating on quality and consistency of both product and service, which applies to both our coffee and our franchisee teams. You have to ask: 'what do your team members need, and what will make them buy into this business?' This is what we concentrated on.

"We became very critical in self-appraising about how we serve our franchisees."

It is not lost on Tony Brogden that in this, he was re-visiting his own past. He had been there as a franchisee, and remained acutely aware of how a franchisee feels and what they want to achieve from their investment.

"In 2009, Ralph Lutton at Brodie's asked me 'how many of your franchisees are happy?', and I answered 'about five per cent of them'. Now I would say that it's probably 98 per cent.

"We now understand our business far more than before, and probably more than many other businesses do. We understand what is being sold at any time of day."

This information is not kept by management,

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*"I believe that if any franchisor forgets that his franchisees are his customers... then he's in trouble."*

- Tony Brogden

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he notes. The Puccino's philosophy is to be open with the franchisees, and share performance information.

"We are not afraid to tell our people what we are doing. We look at this business closely to ensure that our franchisees make money - I am not going to persuade people to invest in this business if I am not sure that they are going to be making money and being comfortable with it.

"I believe that if any franchisor forgets this, or forgets that his franchisees are his customers, then he's in trouble. I can certainly say that when I am looking for new and innovative products and ideas, I look at it from both commercial points of view - if we sell a bag of nuts, how much does the franchisee make? This has to be the default position for any franchise company - how good is it for the franchisee?

"When we introduce new ideas and new products, we discuss with our franchisees the way that you see sales move, according to what you put on the menu. Five years ago, not all franchisees would have got this - today, our franchisees understand very well the reasons behind growth and performance, and the ones whose business went up 105 per cent in the past year are the kind who understand their business on a constant basis.

"This is a far better situation than having the kind of franchisees who wait for figures from their accountants to see how they're doing."

Whatever his analysis tells him about bags of nuts, and other newish products, Puccinos did not add one major item to its menu for a long time. Still today, the flat white is not on every store's menu.

"I did not feel comfortable charging customers for the most premium drink in the trade before I was satisfied that we could produce it consistently well.

"As an individual, I drink either flat white or Americano, drinks in which you tell a good or bad coffee very quickly.

"We believe in doing our best all the time, so we worked with the London School of Coffee, who have modelled some of their courses for Puccino's... I learned a lot myself, in the first



Tony Brogden

five minutes!

"Now, every single person working on our sites comes to head office specifically to work on the flat white - and they have to pass, before they get to put the drink on their menu."

Now, Puccino's is a group showing progress - in 2012 and the following years, like-for-like sales went up by twelve per cent, and in the current year, like-for-like sales are up 14.4 per cent in the first quarter. But, compared to some groups, store openings are relatively few.

"Although we know that landlords are pleased with us, my target for this year is only three or four more units. Again, this is because the job is all about bringing the people along with you.

"People invest in a business like this because they want to be part of a winning team, and I want to be comfortable about the way both of us are growing - if you want a franchisee to invest in your brand, you have to be comfortable about sitting in front of that franchisee now, and in a year's time, and in five years' time. So I will not expand by opening up sites for the sake of it, when the real aim is to create successful growing business for the franchisees."

One aspect of the Puccino's chain which has not changed since the very beginning is the company character. It has always been irreverent, and pioneered some ways of working which have become more common - the use of quirky messages on A-boards, equally bizarre slogans and messages on sugar sachets and other packaging, the wide use of messages on takeaway cups, and even the use of unusual surfaces such as the central bowl area in a saucer.

It was over ten years ago that the writer of a book on creative marketing highlighted this, noting that 'the brand's identity is being constantly projected at the customer, at every point of contact, from the apparently insignificant sugar packs (with the words 'don't diet') to the cups (with the slogan 'kiss me... no tongues').

This is not 'consistency of message' in the conventional sense - it is a more surprising and engaging kind of consistency. The early founders actually advertised for staff in the *Stage*, thinking that out-of-work actors would be the right staff for Puccino's, and they created the word 'helpfulness' - unlike other retailers, they would be glad to give out change for the car park, and on railway sites, would know the time of the next train, and would carry pushchairs up the steps. The theory was that everything can be a medium, and everything can project a brand'.

It still applies, says Tony Brogden.

"The character of Puccino's is not our only USP, but we are still willing to poke fun at ourselves, and at others. The guy who did that early artwork for us still works on our cup designs, and we still have the same kind of things written on our saucers: 'in the dishwasher, nobody can hear you scream...!'"

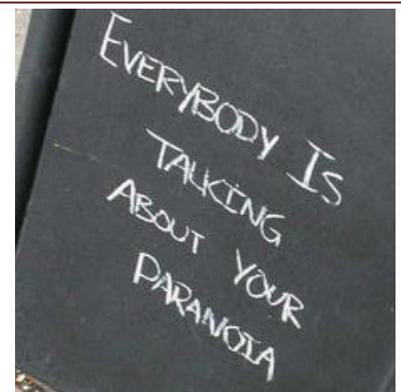
It does not always go down well.

"We have two kinds of mineral waters - our Boring water, which is still, and Bumpy, which is carbonated.

"I actually got a letter of complaint about this, from someone who said we were turning youth away from drinking water!"



This tasteful and restrained piece of car design is by the Paper Cup Company of Lancashire. It is usually driven by managing director Mark Woodward who, we are assured, wears a matching jacket!



This latest example of A-board philosophy is, we think, almost certainly from Street Coffee of London - it's their style!

The UK's main critic of Fairtrade has once again attacked the Foundation's work in support of coffee farmers. This is the economist Peter Griffiths, who was once responsible for one of the most dramatic Allegra coffee conferences, when he appeared on a panel discussing ethical certification and astonished the entire gathering with a well-prepared diatribe designed to show that the Fairtrade system does not actually benefit farmers.

He has now crossed swords with the Foundation again, this time in an online debate run by the Guardian as part of its 'Spotlight on Commodities' series, entitled 'what's the best step coffee brands can take to support farmers?'

This debate, which was a perfectly well-intentioned idea, featured a predictable line-up of potential speakers, which might possibly suggest lazy research on the part of the organisers. There were representatives of Cafedirect, Union Hand-Roasted, Starbucks, Fairtrade, and WWF. There was also someone representing Colombian farmers, and a professor of anthropology.

Less predictably, there was Dr Peter Griffiths of Edinburgh, described by the Guardian as 'a marketing economist, international consultant and speaker, an agricultural economist working for the major aid agencies'. This was wide of the mark – he does indeed have a track record of working for poor communities, but he is also the author of 'Why Fairtrade Isn't Fair', and similar papers. It may well be that the Guardian was not aware of his views, which they must have realised when he lost no time in alleging that while all ethically-sourced brands endorse the idea of better conditions for farmers, certain payments simply 'disappear' before reaching the farm gate.

He was quick to respond when the Fairtrade speaker made a fairly typical statement in support of the organisation's work, saying that "through the stability of the Fairtrade price and the premium, we have seen that many Fairtrade co-operatives are able to forward plan better and invest in employing permanent technical assistant staff, who are then developing long-term strategies to improve quality."

There is no evidence whatsoever of this, retorted Griffiths. The statement was "a broad generalisation unsupported by fact", and he added that "what information we get from Fairtrade International suggests that this is a tiny part of the expenditure of what is already a minute premium."

From this point, the gloves appeared to be off, and Griffiths seized upon one quite typical but well-meant remark from a speaker, who commented that it is hard to work out which initiatives ensure more value reaches producers... it's vital the relationship between farmers and the coffee brands they supply is closely scrutinised.

# What is 'fair' for farmers?

Once again, an innocuous and well-meaning debate turns into a questioning of the value of the Fairtrade system



*Peter Griffiths in typical full flow*

“  
*They deleted four of my responses as 'potentially actionable'...and I was being polite!*  
 ”

- Dr Peter Griffiths

"I have been doing just that for the last ten years, and I have collected and used research others have done," replied the economist. "Research shows that generous consumers around the world pay one to two billion euros a year extra for Fairtrade, with a miniscule proportion, perhaps 50 million euros reaching the Third World, and none at all reaching the farmers in the form of higher prices.

"There is seriously big money going astray - enough to buy 300 million mosquito nets a year and wipe out malaria. The extra money that consumers think is going to the farmers is being pocketed by big business."

The Fairtrade speaker did not like this, and commented that "independent research shows that Fairtrade is contributing to higher household income for farmers, and helping them to earn better prices for their coffee. Research in Uganda found that under Fairtrade, household living standards of coffee farmers increased by 30 per cent and their likelihood of being poor decreased by 50 per cent. New research

by the University of Greenwich that assesses the impact of Fairtrade for coffee smallholders in four countries (Indonesia, Mexico, Peru and Tanzania), has found that in three of the four research countries, Fairtrade farmers reported higher incomes than non-Fairtrade farmers. They also found that Fairtrade farmers and their organisations have become more resilient and less vulnerable to shocks such as price crashes, as a result of the Fairtrade Minimum Price and the Fairtrade Premium. This report will soon be published."

This also provoked an immediate response. "This is incorrect in many, many ways," said Peter Griffiths. "The Fairtrade standards are quite explicit that there are no minimum prices or price guarantees for farmers.

"All guarantees are to the exporting firm. The Fairtrade standards define the 'producer price' for coffee as being the FOB price, in the ship, at the exporting port, after export taxes and the costs of assembly, processing and transport from the farm (perhaps hundreds of miles, even a thousand miles) and the very high costs of operating Fairtrade, certification and audit have been paid. It is paid to the final exporting firm, not the farmer.

"So it is far, far, greater than the price received by the farmer."

Furthermore, he alleged, coffee buyers in importing countries are to blame for 'extortion'.

"There is evidence that even the exporting firm does not receive the guaranteed price. There is a lot of evidence that importers extort some of this premium from the exporters, sometimes paying them a lower price than the open market price.

"A very complex analysis is needed to determine whether or not the exporter has been

paid the Fairtrade price: it takes months. Research shows that an exporter serving 300 co-operatives was paid substantially less than the guaranteed price over a 12-year period, with between 66 per cent and 83 per cent of the price premium being stolen by importers in some years.

"While the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation's international standards clearly state that this form of extortion exists, there appears to be no auditing of this."

This is a quite astonishing allegation, and Dr Griffiths suggested that far more detailed investigation into the effect of Fairtrade on farmers is needed.

"There are always claims of massive impact from terrible aid projects pushed by political or religious cranks, by well-intentioned but incompetent people, by incompetents in the aid industry, by governments with a political or economic agenda, and by out-and-out crooks etc. So the international agencies demand that impact studies must be properly carried out.

"So Fairtrade impact studies should have, at the minimum, surveys of the situation before and after the farmers (or their co-operatives) joined Fairtrade. Since they recruit the rich successful farmers, the farmers are likely to stay rich: it is not the result of Fairtrade.

"There should be a comparison of what happened to Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade farmers,

“ *There is seriously big money going astray...* ”

so an increase in world prices cannot be claimed as a benefit for Fairtrade. This is very difficult indeed and very expensive, so I have not seen anything remotely near a real impact study for Fairtrade – in fact its design makes impact studies impossible."

Much of this must have come as a surprise to the debate moderators, and Peter Griffiths has now told us that some of his comments were edited.

"What is interesting is that the Guardian deleted four of my responses as 'potentially actionable'...and I was being polite. My fully-researched, reviewed academic papers with loads of references are much blunter!"

However, Dr Griffiths told us, he has some sympathy for another speaker in the debate, from the Café for Change organisation in Colombia. This organisation was ticked off in the course of the debate for effectively setting out a manifesto, which claimed that less than one cent of every cup of coffee drunk in developed countries helps fight poverty in coffee growing regions, and called for coffee brands to accept their responsibility to

contribute more.

They have suggested that coffee shops, hotels and restaurants in consuming countries should collect a 'compensation' of ten cents per cup sold, and called on Starbucks, Costa, Caffe Nero, Pret a Manger and other chains to take part.

Peter Griffiths told us after the debate that he had heard directly from Café for Change.

"I did get a phone call from the Colombian, who wants a completely different system, getting cafes to charge 10p a cup extra which goes direct to a bank account here, then to an aid organisation in the producing country. He is scathing about Fairtrade and the Rainforest Alliance and their clients - all the importers want is a certification brand, and they cannot give a damn whether the coffee meets the requirement for the certification... which is pretty much what the CEO of one of the biggest supermarkets wrote to me.

"The plus of the system he proposes is that there are virtually no costs in the UK, that a billion or two reaches the producing country, not just £35 million, so it has far more impact even if half is stolen.

"It should be easy enough to keep an eye on the money in the UK: the big problem is seeing that it is usefully spent in the Third World. But I cannot see it getting off the ground unless there is a major scandal about Fairtrade, which is unlikely."

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# Direct Trade comes under fire as being less ethical than Fairtrade

One of the trade's biggest buzzword phrases of recent times comes under fire from an ethical watchdog... to the astonishment of direct-trade importers.

**Some parts of the coffee trade have responded with near-incredulity to a report by Ethical Consumer magazine, which has criticised café chains for their social and environmental performances.**

What has annoyed several members of the trade is the 'subjectivity' of this report - the researcher quite notably favours Fairtrade as one of the main signs of ethical behaviour. Typically, the writers note that their top-rated chain, Soho, is 'the only coffee chain whose coffee, tea and hot chocolate were all Fairtrade'.

However, the survey dismisses the entire concept of 'direct sourcing', the growing modern practice which many coffee roasters claim allows them to pay 'better than Fairtrade' prices.

It is the criticism of direct trading which has upset most people. Ethical Consumer complains that 'the direct trade model of sourcing from farmers does not give the same kind of price support as Fairtrade', and goes on to criticise Harris and Hoole's use of it by saying 'direct trade isn't really a certification scheme; there are no ethical criteria that get verified by third parties. The concept is simply based on dealing with independent farmers directly, and paying top prices for top quality products'.

The magazine goes on to claim, without any justification for the comment, that 'direct traders' claims about pricing can be a bit misleading... growing connoisseur quality coffee incurs extra costs for producers. They may be paid more for it, but it isn't clear how much better off they end up. Thus direct trade cannot be viewed as giving the same kind of price support as Fairtrade's price premiums provide'.

This has not gone down well with the coffee trade. The MD of one very reputable roaster, a pioneer in the concept of direct trade and relationships with coffee farmers, told us that his first reaction was to throw something against his wall.

Elsewhere, Konrad Brits of Falcon made a considered response, pointing out that Fairtrade alone is not the answer in 'ethical' trade:

"Ethics in coffee sourcing suggests that buyers approach their supply chains with the intent not to exploit the farmers who grow the coffee, by treating them fairly. In this, 'fairly' seems to translate into paying a price premium that is above the cost of production. In order to ensure that the farmer pockets the bulk of this premium, the term Direct Trade

“

*Thirteen per cent of our coffee is from unorganised smallholders who are not eligible for participation in Fairtrade. Fifteen per cent is from small-to-medium family farms which are not eligible for Fairtrade... so we provide their access to market.*

- Union Hand-Roasted

”

has sprung from those people in the roasting community who travel to buy from specific farms and smallholder co-operatives.

"Unfortunately, the problems of sustainability and poverty alleviation in coffee are not so easily solved. Coffee is farmed in many of the world's poorest countries, by isolated smallholder farmers made vulnerable through poverty. Many of the farmers multi-crop coffee and food crops on tiny plots of land, producing sometimes only a few bags of coffee each year - this may mean that the annual household income from coffee may be hardly more than \$100.

"So, even if a roaster may double the price to that farmer, the net impact is marginal in terms of lifting these communities out of poverty.

"Certifications, ethical sourcing and nominal price premiums are flagstones in the path to constructing sustainable supply chains, but not one, alone or all together, is the silver bullet. We need to move past the finger-pointing and the moral high ground - we need to acknowledge that risks of the farmers are our risks, too. Their failure will ultimately be our failure.

"No-one, company or individual, and no certification can claim to have found the key to sustainable sourcing."

At Union Hand-Roasted, a long-established player in direct trade, Jeremy Torz was equally careful.

"Their 'standards of proof' as to what consti-

tutes an ethical company are highly subjective and variable.

"We have told them that we believe our direct trade model is an effective approach for sustainable coffee sourcing, compared to Fairtrade. When Ethical Consumer examined the coffee market several years ago, we were ranked as number-one best buy - I am confident that our approach to ethical sourcing is now even more effective and robust.

"Our approach is about developing sustainable trading relationships. We pay producers at least 25 per cent above the Fairtrade minimum price for our coffees, plus additional sustainable and quality premiums, which means we pay in the region of double the Fairtrade floor price. We develop long-term relationships, with multi-year buying contracts so producers have confidence they have a buyer paying a sustainable price for their coffee. We offer pre-finance (at zero interest rates) to producers at the beginning of the harvest, when they are in most urgent need of money.

"Twenty three per cent of the coffee we source from smallholder co-operatives is certified Fairtrade, but thirteen per cent is from unorganised smallholders who are not eligible for participation in Fairtrade. Fifteen per cent is from small-to-medium family farms which are not eligible for Fairtrade... so we provide their access to market.

"Our biggest co-operative supplier has indicated that they can see no additional value in financial terms in going through the process of certifying themselves Fairtrade.

"The Ethical Consumer survey is emphasised around Fairtrade and conjectures that our Direct Trade model does not confer the same benefits. This is an old-fashioned way of thinking, solely looking at certification-based sourcing which is about commodity coffee; it's not about speciality coffee.

"Direct Trade requires a far more involved approach. It is not about a roaster going to visit the farm where their coffee was grown - it is about ensuring cost of production is an integral part of price negotiations and financial transparency with all participants in the supply chain. The report states that our direct trade model of sourcing does not give the same kind of price support as Fairtrade - I wonder what they base this on?"



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Among the speakers and contributors at this year's Caffe Culture show, our favourite was Bonny, who cropped up in a talk by café owner Hugo Hercod as an example of the kind of character needed to run a modern coffee shop.

Hugo runs Relish in Wadebridge, and is distinguished as a former UK barista champion. His presentation at the show was rather challengingly titled 'the importance of being average' - when working in an industry where the big clichés are all about excellence and standing out from the crowd, Hugo reminded everyone that what actually makes a business work is the core activity, not the glamorous bits.

"My main point was that unless you do the basics well and stick within familiar bounds your business is very unlikely to succeed," he told us. "I used Bonny as an example of what is needed to run a successful business - she's nothing out of the ordinary as a Jack Russell, but being a Jack Russell gives her a certain character. She's taught me a great deal about attitude so I thought I'd use her to convey to the audience what it takes.

"My wife worked with small children at a special school where the kids are off the scale, and assumed that her ability to handle children meant she could handle a badly brought up terrier (Bonny's a rescue dog). The lesson here is that just because you like dinner parties, that doesn't mean you should open a restaurant. Just because you really like your local cafe doesn't mean you're at all cut out to run one.

"Bonny is 'a project' - you can't take your eye off her, trust her or stop training her. If you give an inch, she'll take a mile. The lesson here is that you must treat your business as

# It's great to be average!



an eternal project, and you can't lose interest... because things will go wrong.

"Bonny is focused: if you have food, she'll do whatever you ask. If she sees a rabbit, rat, squirrel or cat you can do anything you want and she couldn't give less of a stuff.

"The lesson here is that you must focus hundred-per-cent on every important task... multi-tasking's never as good.

"She's committed: once she's decided to do something, she commits herself to it. Last week she dug up my Mum's back porch, which is paving stones and concrete. Last year, over a period of a week, while we weren't watching, she ate her way through the shed floor to get at a rat. The fourth lesson is - make every job have a purpose and focus on it until it's finished. She's tenacious and

doesn't do anything half heartedly... neither should you."

Here, noted Hugo, his comparisons brought up the curiosity that many people who open coffee shops and tea-rooms do it because they want to live the dream.

"Bonny's bred for ratting, and it's in her DNA. She is bred to be compact and efficient, her size makes her good for the job she does, and she fits in our tiny cottage. Likewise, a café owner has to be right for the job, and the cafe has to be the right size for the market it's serving. The vast majority of cafe owners simply don't suit the business... they're bred to be civil servants or yoga instructors!

"And Bonny is not young, because she's ten, but she looks great. The lesson here is that you need yourself and your cafe looking new and fresh, because nobody likes a tired and grubby cafe or a knackered-looking host."

And Hugo told his audience, too many people and businesses strive to be the 'next greatest thing', which takes their attention off the importance of current business basics.

"By constantly aiming to be the best, the most cutting-edge, the edgiest, the next big thing, we are setting ourselves up to fail. This is a business, not an ego trip - so set achievable goals, treat your business as a marathon and not a sprint, and by all means learn from the best, emulate them, but don't try to 'be' them.

"To get to good or great, you must go through 'average' first... so, it's quite OK to be average!"

## "We all know which kind of tea sells best..."

There have been several attempts to market a specific London-type tea, and the latest is Rosy Lee, which was shown by Lorraine Rogers. Not surprisingly, there were images of pearly kings and the like on her stand at Caffe Culture.

"The story of this is that I really wanted a black tea like Yorkshire Tea, a robust 'proper tea'. I went to a lot of wholesalers, and didn't get anywhere, but Tudor helped me with a lot of ideas, and I really thank them for that.

"We now bag and pack our own tea, but I'm not going to pretend we go and travel to tea estates... we are what you see. And we do not go in for flavoured teas - I don't want to go there. We all know which tea sells the best and makes the money.

"The response has been fantastic, especially from those who have been using corporate suppliers, and who then see us looking like a little café ourselves... they have got it straight



away. People from the north and midlands have got the story, and they like it, too. The only ones who didn't get it straight away were the foreign visitors... some Chinese ones needed a little explanation!"

Quite charmingly, one of her first visitors at the show was her namesake from

Wellingborough, Ria Chambers from Ria's Rosy Lee Tearoom, who could not resist investigating a tea of the same name.

Ria, we hear has recently had a promotion involving music-related cakes and biscuits of her own devising... she has been serving Guns 'n' Rosy cakes, The Jam, The Scone Roses, and Cream featuring Ginger Baker.

"This all went well," she tells us. "In the summer all the music festivals take place, so we decided to have our own cake festival. It inspired a very bright window display which caught a lot of peoples' eye, and many people got into the spirit of it suggesting their own ideas such as Rock cakes and Madame Butterfly cakes.

"I found two new recipes for it, Hello Dolly Bars and Elvis cake which were so popular I have kept them on rotation on the permanent cake list, and several people have ordered the Elvis cake for special occasions."

It has been a big month for 'strength' in coffees, and rather unusually, one debut-making exhibitor at Caffe Culture managed to kick off something of an industry debate about their proposition.

This was TrueStart, whose new product is a coffee intended for athletes, and their big argument is that the caffeine content of the product remains constant.

At their stand, we were told that it is now a proven fact that caffeinated coffee naturally boosts athletic performance by up to 23 per cent compared with conventional carbohydrate-electrolyte drinks. Then came the surprising bit:

"Athletes, cyclists and sports people are now focussing on coffee, but the caffeine content in coffees varies. Our founders of Truestart are athletes and always had coffee as part of their regime - some days they felt wired, other days they felt nothing. They realised they were getting a variation in caffeine, and it took them a year to fix it."

The brand's promotional material says: 'did you know that the amount of caffeine in your usual coffee varies wildly, even if you stick to the same blend? Your average supermarket coffee could contain as little as 2mg and as much as 200mg per serving. TrueStart is the only coffee that guarantees the consistently high, optimum caffeine content equivalent to a sports gel (75-115mg per 2g serving). This is down to the sophisticated technology used during our freeze drying process, which enables us to regulate the caffeine content in our premium coffee. Developed by triathletes, TrueStart coffee provides the optimum caffeine content to help avoid the dreaded bonk'.

The product is currently an instant coffee, all Colombian Arabica, with a roast-and-ground version to come. Their coffee supplier is FFI, whose managing director Austin Sugarman would only tell us that this matter of 'regulated caffeine content' is 'an innovative but confidential process that delivers the consistent result required'.

The suggestion that caffeine content varies between different batches of the same blend came as a surprise to many established members of the trade, when we put the matter up for comment.

Peter James, at James Gourmet Coffee, remarked perhaps cynically that 'coffee coming from the same source it is highly unlikely to be that variable... unless it is a really bad source!'

The more likely explanation, put forward by several respondents, was described by Jeremy Torz of Union Hand-Roasted:

"This suggests they are talking about caffeine in the actual brew rather than the coffee itself. Some time ago there was a piece in the newspapers about this issue - they tested Costa, Starbucks and a few others and found anything from about 50mg through to around 180mg. We discussed this at the time and the feeling was that the brewed output depended partly upon the blend (pure arabica or robusta based blends, robusta carrying around twice the caffeine of arabica) but also on how the coffee was brewed - single or double espresso (7-9gm ground coffee against 18-22gm) and whether the shot poured correctly, or whether due to incorrect grinding it may have been under-extracted or even the converse!

"Varying widely in the same blend is highly unlikely for the dry bean or ground coffee... external factors such as the preparation will be the only reason."

We put this to TrueStart's founder Simon Hills, who disagreed.

"There have been many studies that show that the amount of caffeine varies between brands, blends and brews so sadly I have to disagree."

He cited a reference to an American study published in the Journal of Analytical Toxicology, which found that 16oz of caffeinated coffee from Starbucks had 100mg more of caffeine than the same serving size from Dunkin' Donuts. The study also alleged that Starbucks' caffeinated breakfast blend, purchased at a Florida store, varied in its caffeine content from day to day, from 259mg per 16oz cup to 564mg. But these, of course, are brewed coffees.

Simon Hills continues to disagree: "the simple fact about TrueStart is

# The dreaded bonk...



A new coffee brand caused an unexpected amount of debate at Caffe Culture, by suggesting that caffeine content can vary, even within one brand...

that it is the only coffee on the market that can guarantee its caffeine content."

The trade is unlikely to agree with him, but we really did have to ask - in TrueStart's promotional material, what is a 'dreaded bonk'?

"The bonk is a triathlete's way of saying 'hitting the wall'. It is the point at which you run out of carbohydrates to fuel yourself, and your body has to switch to burning fat for fuel. During that period, life becomes very unpleasant when cycling or running.

"Caffeine makes it easier for your body to burn fat, and much sooner."

Elsewhere, Taylor's of Harrogate announced a high-caffeine coffee, but did so through a more conventional route - its High Voltage reverses the usual proportions in a blend, with 75 per cent robusta. The beans have been slow roasted for longer than usual until ultra-dark to maximise caffeine strength, says Taylors.

"We're seeing a growing demand for higher caffeine products, with sales of our previous strongest blend, Hot Lava Java, up 21 per cent. High Voltage has been designed to appeal to a young and active audience."

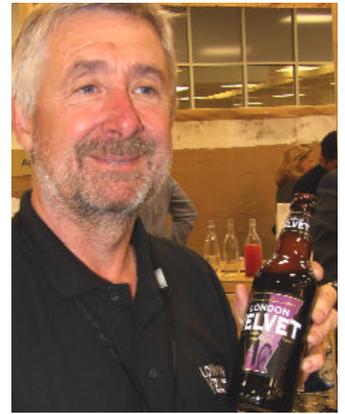


# A craft beer to suit coffee shops?

**More and more speciality coffee shops are promoting a link with craft beer, and selling that beside coffee where possible. At this year's show, London Velvet appeared, with a view to entering the café market. It is a blend of cider and porter.**

"We are a speciality beer, and we recognise that the licensed coffee shop is going to be the big trend," said the brand's David Green. "We think our brand is suited to this - we are not talking about a five-pint-a-night beer, but a drink which has wide appeal across ages and genders. The cider is made in Hereford, and the London Porter is made in Lancashire. We bring them together and package it.

"We've had a great reaction - the unique blend really surprises tasters with its refreshing and easy drinking taste. As more and more coffee shops gain their licenses, we will see London Velvet grow in distribution."



**A new speciality drinking chocolate brand popped up at Caffe Culture - this was Jaz and Jules, who told us that their flake-format product features a genuine 'artisan' element.**

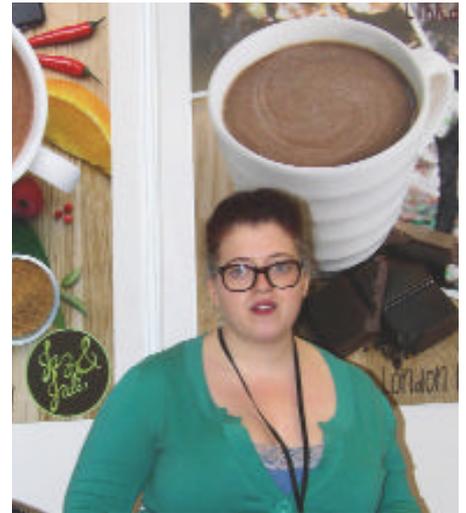
"About five years ago, we were two girls in our twenties, with no start-up capital and no industry contacts, who just wanted good hot chocolate," Jasmine Kershaw told us. "So we bought five kilos from Barry Callebaut and started playing with it.

"Now, our big thing is our traceability. We have good links and contact with the growers, although we buy through importers because we don't have import licences. I would love to source direct, but we just don't have the money! Juliet went to visit cocoa farmers in the rainforest last year, and we do hope to go to meet farmers in Madagascar next year.

"We receive it in various different forms, so we often find ourselves working with a semi-finished product. We temper it, and at this point we put the flavours in, using fruit oils and spices.

"Then we grate it, very fine - this is the same as fine flakes, which a lot of caterers like for speed of preparation. We do grate it ourselves, and we do pack it ourselves, because we like to do as much of it ourselves as we can.

"The next step would be getting a roaster and a concher... but we are on the way to becoming 'true chocolate makers!'"



# Flavoured Indian-style yogurt for cycling cafes

**One of the extremely unusual products winning attention at Caffe Culture was Lashbrook Lassis, an Indian-inspired yogurt drink. The founders told us that they discovered the idea on their travels.**

"We so much enjoyed what we tasted in India, we decided to start creating new and innovative flavours. Coffee, cardamom and pistachio is a new taste, and it appeals to western tastes... we know this, from all the work we've done at farmers' markets. It's like a kind of fruity latte! (Others are pear, spinach and ginger and beetroot, egg and cinnamon). The interest for the café owner is in selling it in the bottle, to go. We're doing very well in the sports market - cyclists like it, and rowers like it, so the cycle cafes would use it. We are really enjoying the response from cyclists."



# The 'truly biodegradable' coffee capsule appears

**Among the truly unusual launches at the Coffee Fest was Marley Coffee's biodegradable Nespresso-compatible capsule.**

Marley is the brand which works the coffee farm owned by the family of the reggae star Bob Marley. To make its point about the degradability of its capsules, it has created the world's first edible capsule... not that anyone would want to, of course, but the brand is making a point.

"It's not being edible that's really important, except that it shows it's really all-natural - it's a food-safe, biodegradable capsule," said Marley's Guy Wilmot. "I guess the 'world first' really comes from the fact that it is the first truly biodegradable capsule - it really does biodegrade in 90 days, unlike bioplastics which take years to biodegrade. Ideally, it can be put in your compost or vegetable matter/food waster recycling, which is prevalent in most UK cities. But, even if it goes to landfill, it biodegrades rapidly, so disposal is not a problem. This is the real deal."

What is this going to mean for Marley in promoting both the coffee and the name, to Nespresso-using caterers in the UK?

"Right now, we are having a soft launch, presenting this both from an ecological and biodegradable point of view, but also a cup profile point of view. It flows well, produces an excellent crema and has real character and great taste.

"Later on in the year, the real launch will be coming at Anuga where Marley Coffee is exhibiting, and so will Nespresso. It's the classic David v Goliath!"

# A cork-coated espresso machine!

The eye-catching item at the Qualitasse stand was one of their new Fiamma espresso machines, from Portugal, finished in a quite unusual way. The side panels, steam controls, and portafilter handles were all covered in... cork.

The relevance is that cork is the biggest export from the part of Portugal where the machines are made, although there were differing opinions as to how practical this might be in real use.

"Cork is the shell of a tree," we were told. "You can only harvest it from a tree once every nine years. It used to be used for wine corks or insulation, but now it has been turned into leather-like products, such as purses or umbrellas.

"This cork covering on a machine is mainly for show purposes, but it has sold in the Middle East to very high-end restaurants. In a café, the problem would be of the handles and knobs, being handled hundreds of times a day - although the cork can be sealed we don't know how hard-wearing it might be."

Nevertheless, say Qualitasse, a machine which was displayed as a talking point did arouse serious offers.

"That said, we have a prospective customer who would like to take 30 machines in cork over the next two years, so we are looking at ways to better protect the machine from milk and grubby coffee covered hands.

"We have kept the cork machine from the show, and if anyone wants to take it, they will be provided with a set of standard, more hard-wearing panels free of charge."

Cosmetics aside, Qualitasse reported a lot of technical interest in Fiamma.

"Most interest has come from our concept of multiple boilers - people



have been very complimentary, and see that it gives you better control. There has also been a lot of interest in our energy-saving feature - this heats up sequentially, from the main boilers, to the other boilers, and then the groups. It doesn't draw so much power all at once, and this doesn't mean it's slower... in fact, it's faster! We shall next be introducing an even more economical one, with separate boilers for groups and steam."



Press'd was a new launch at the London Coffee Fest. It's a coffee concentrate - "you're pressed for time, you want something fast and good, so you reach for this, squeeze into a mug, and pour on hot water," they told us. "It is 'instant' coffee with true Arabica, true extraction, and true aroma. We expect it to be priced at £2.99 a bottle, and that has sixteen squeezes in it."



*This may be the smallest example of latte art we have seen - it is by Maitland Steel of Atkinsons in Lancaster, and was poured in a tea scoop!*

The latest guide to top regional coffee shops is the Northern one, which has prompted the interesting remark from barista champion Maxwell Colonna-Dashwood that such books mean that we are now seeing the emergence of 'coffee tourism'. The Northern Independent Coffee Guide is published by the same people who did a guide to speciality coffee in the south-west, and the group of trade people who have recommended the 80 venues described in the book include Dave Olejnik of Laynes Espresso in Leeds, Paul Meikle-Janney of Coffee Community in Huddersfield, and Ian Steel of Atkinsons in Lancaster. The book features the expected coffee shop and roastery reviews, information on different brew types and equipment, and so on.

Drink Me, the powdered chai product, has just won 'Best Beverage for Inflight' at the Airline Retail Conference and is now proposing to expand within the travel sector. The brand is the leading instant chai latte in the UK, and also doubled its export business last year. It recently entered America through the Caffé Nero chain, which serves Drink Me in the UK, but said that it was unable to find a similar one in the US.

A coffee shop that doubles as a wine-tasting store has opened in Copthorne, West Sussex. This is Olivers Coffee and Wine Shop, where customers can sample up to 24 wines through a system of pre-paid cards and a row of help-yourself dispensers that give 25ml, 50ml and 125ml measures. Prices for samples start at 30p.

The Monin brand of flavoured syrups is launching a collection of YouTube videos, to provide ideas and advice for restaurants and cafes. It begins with a series of new summer drinks presentations featuring Monin's brand ambassador James Coston, who said that the move is in response to increasing requests from trade customers.

# The astonishing profit in coffee cocktails

**We make no apologies for saying that of all the barista contests, our favourite is the Coffee In Good Spirits one - and not just because it allows alcohol in the recipes.**

This year's contest was held at the Caffe Culture show, and demonstrated exactly what we find so fascinating about this challenge, as the ten finalists displayed some remarkably creative ideas in their drinks, highlighting the potential profitability of coffee-related cocktails (and today, in the right bars, these drinks can reach sky-high prices).

Although the baristas have a free hand in their personal signature drink, every contestant must make the judges an Irish Coffee, and it is fascinating to see whether they try to make something new of this most traditional of coffee cocktails.

One entrant did - and turned the usual recipe upside down.

This was Dave Jameson of Union Hand-Roasted, and he did something which we recently reported as having occurred in Tristan Stephenson's recent book on coffee - instead of mixing hot coffee and cold cream, he reversed the temperatures.

"I had been considering using a cold Irish Coffee for a while, but then I saw Tristan Stephenson's book too, which validated the idea... although I do challenge Tristan that his recipe still treats 'coffee' as a singular flavour descriptor, whereas within speciality coffee we know that we have over 800 flavour descriptors, which makes it more complex even than wine!

"But I agree with what Tristan Stephenson writes about Irish coffee often tasting woody. I find that, particularly when served hot, the flavour of the whisky cask becomes dominant - and this is fine when you have a delicious sherry cask aged whisky for example, but having done extensive research on this (and it's a dirty job, but someone has to do it!) I agree that the majority of whiskies I tried were disappointingly woody when put with hot coffee.

"Cold coffee has a number of advantages - the flavour profile is different, the combination of whisky and coffee can be better balanced, and cold coffee can react better to the addition of sugar, which helps the cream float better.

"Aroma plays almost no part in Irish coffee, as the thick layer of cream insulates the coffee, and so very few aromatics can come



*The Espresso Old-Fashioned*

through. Because of this it is important to pick a coffee with some great tactile qualities and a clear taste descriptor. I chose Los Lajones Natural Caturra from Panama, which is dense, full-bodied and sweet.

"I chose to use it as espresso, because it is quick and because I wanted to chill the coffee quickly with minimal dilution... but the crema is a problem, because it can oxidise quickly and become bitter, as well as affecting how well the cream floats, and the final appearance, which can be worth a lot of points.

"To counteract this, I filtered my espressos using an Aeropress. I added iced water, 25ml whisky and 15ml of Mexican Orange Blossom Honey syrup to each coffee and topped with cream. I did a lot of experiments with warmed cream, but I could not get the presentation that I was happy with, so I chose to go with 'cool' cream."

Here, Dave hit an unexpected snag.

"Unfortunately, under the stage lights my cream turned to butter, so my Irish Coffees didn't turn out quite how I had hoped!

"If they had worked out, the first sensation would have been the mouth-coating richness of the cream, feeling like chocolate melting in the mouth, which would then give way to the cool under-layer of coffee and whisky. This has a tropical fruit flavour, sweet, balanced, full bodied and refreshing (which is not a common descriptor of Irish Coffee!) with flavours of pineapple, mango and passion fruit.

"This could easily be made using cold brew coffee too, which would make it ludicrously quick to serve."

This year's British champ turned out to be another very well-known barista - the title went to Sang Ho Park, the South Korean barista who is head of roasting and quality at the Square Mile roastery. And after this event, he went on to take sixth place in the world

Good Spirits contest in mid-June (curiously, he came behind another Korean, who took fifth).

At the British final, his signature drink was a complex one.

"For my signature beverage, I decided to serve a hot drink, and highlight the flavours you get from the coffee," he told us. "The predominant flavours I got from my coffee were blackcurrant, brown sugar, raisins and dark chocolate.

"For each cup, I used one shot of espresso. To amplify the notes of brown sugar and raisins, I used Ron Zacapa 23 rum (a Guatemalan aged rum, which is often aged in sherry casks), reduced in low heat to increase the sweetness, and added a thickening agent to make it into a syrup, which enhanced the body."

This was followed by a very surprising ingredient.

"For the dark chocolate notes, I used chaff tea. Chaff is a by-product of the roasting process, and when made into a tea, it gives this malty, dark chocolatey notes, and a lingering bitterness that replicates the bitterness from dark chocolate.

"Lastly, for the notes of blackcurrants, I found a Hermo gin from Sweden, which is infused with blackcurrant and honey. I vaporised the gin, making it into a gin cloud, which sat above the liquid of my signature drink - so the judges had to inhale the vapour with the liquid content."

Among the runner-up signature drinks, we were again particularly taken with the one by David Jameson, who came third. This was the Marmalade Crescendo.

"I had come across a brilliant coffee from the Yayu Wild Forest reserve in South-West Ethiopia," he told us. "Union have been working on the Yayu forest project with Kew Gardens and have been helping the co-operatives to work with the forest to manage it sympathetically and preserve biodiversity whilst producing great coffee. All the coffee is totally wild.

"The coffee I used is a classic South-West Ethiopian flavour profile - upfront floral aroma, lemon citrus acidity and a long complex fruit finish. I get really excited by it, but the majority of people don't get to enjoy coffees like this, so I wanted to find a way to make it accessible to new consumers.

"The recipe calls for 60ml of Botanist Islay Dry Gin, distilled on Islay, more commonly known for its whiskies, and is a nice echo of the wild forest coffee - light, delicate and floral with a citrus flavour. Next I used 30ml of Grand Marnier, and 10ml of Mexican Orange Blossom Honey syrup which adds sweetness, citrus and florality.

"Finally I added a double espresso.



*The Marmalade Crescendo*

"To serve, I used a 10ml Limoncello rinse in the glass with some crushed ice - roll it around the glass to coat it, then discard it to give the flavour of the lemon without the sourness of lemon juice, or any additional alcohol from the Limoncello.

"I added 30 ml of Taittinger champagne to the serving glass, then added all ingredients to the shaker, added ice, shook, strained and served it into a champagne coupe or martini glass and garnished with edible flowers."

One of the main considerations of cocktail creations is whether they are commercially practical, quick to make, and profitable in a bar situation. Could this one be put on a menu?

"It is specific to the target market," was David's practical reply. "This is aimed at



*Sang Ho Park*

really top-end, premium cocktail bars, or the hotels with an international reputation for their cocktails, and who can charge £15-£20 as the base line for a cocktail. With this pricing, it is profitable and commercially viable.

"It can be customised and adjusted, though - you could substitute Prosecco and use a more mainstream Ethiopian coffee.

"On the other hand, you could also go

crazy and pitch it at international playboys and rap moguls, and use Cristal champagne and a Boquete Geisha from Panama and charge £75 for it!"

We were also impressed by the drink from Josh Clarke of Clifton Coffee, who perhaps uniquely, featured a beer in his recipe.

"The drink is called Espresso Old Fashioned," he told us. "My favourite cocktail is an Old Fashioned, and the basis of the idea was to re-invent the cocktail in a way that could be viable to serve in a modern speciality espresso bar.

"I used one full measure of our Las Nubes Geisha espresso with delicate floral notes, packed with jasmine, white grape and bergamot. This was then iced which maximised acidity.

"I used 25ml of Tactical Nuclear Penguin beer from Brewdog." (This has been rated as the world's strongest beer, is hard to get, and is phenomenally expensive). "This beer is an imperial stout/porter, aged in whiskey barrels, and acts as a perfect replacement for the bourbon in the Old Fashioned.

"I added 25ml of Colombian Penula Sugar simple syrup, 15ml Grand Marnier orange liqueur, and six drops of Angostura orange bitter and six drops of Angostura classic aromatic bitter, used in Old Fashioned cocktails.

"I made two Cascara ice spheres, brewed hot then poured into a mould and frozen, one orange twist, and added a cherry soaked for 24 hours in American bourbon. All the liquid was shaken with ice then poured straight over the cascara spheres - the judges were told to eat the cherries after taking their first sip."

Is it a commercially-viable drink?

"The concept was that everything in the drink had a purpose, that's why it was there - each ingredient added something. But it's still super easy to make, and pretty quick, too.

"As a cocktail it probably costs around £3 to make, but is easily sold for £6.50 upwards. All the ingredients can be put into a cocktail shaker while the espresso shot is pulling, then the shot is added, shaken and poured.

"The orange and cherry is added... job done!"

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# The Mule gets an even grumpier new look

**Grumpy Mule, the brand which was designed to stand apart from the average, has been redesigned... because it was in danger of becoming like other brands!**

The brand was created by the Bolling roastery of Yorkshire eight years ago as a vehicle for distinctive and unique coffees, sourced through direct relationships with farmers, and was given the character of a somewhat exasperated-looking cartoon mule (and, it was said at the time, the name was a reference to the roastery's managing director!)

The brand has done very well, winning many Great Taste awards, selling well in the deli and speciality foodstore sector, and then entering foodservice.



*The new-look Mule*

Now, rather surprisingly, the slightly charming cartoon mule has been fired and replaced with a rather more abstract one. The packaging has gone from a soft brown colour to black, and the coffee descriptions on the front have been radically shortened to just three words.

According to the Mule's managing director, Brendan McDonnell of Bewley's, the change of image and language may be down to other brands copying the style and language of the Mule, to the degree that what was a novel character has become one of a crowd.

"The Grumpy Mule has always had an edgy name to it, but its tone of voice was now similar to the way that all brands speak.

"One of the aspects of this is a sense of the pretentiousness of certain coffees – much of this is unintentional, I'm sure, but the language of coffee has developed a certain ubiquitous tone, with a lot of 'worthiness' about it.

"All this language about floral tones and notes of hazelnut is setting people up for disappointment, because many people just aren't going to pick up on those tones. There is just too much information on the front of some packs.

"So we settled for a three-word descriptor, and when we launched it at the London Coffee Festival, the idea was that members of the public could suggest their own three words to describe themselves, and we would print those three words on their own pack!

"Of all the brand launches I have been involved in over thirty years, I have never been struck by such a reaction - people seemed to get it straight away."

Why the new illustration?

"One of the things you do when acquiring a business is to avoid the knee-jerk reaction of 'we have to change things', so we didn't change it for the sake of doing so.

"We found, with our early research, that people got the idea of the Mule as being edgy, and inferring a certain disgruntlement of the average, which is correct... but the early charm of that mule illustration was perhaps seen as too cartoonish, and too childish."

Grumpy Mule continues to grow in foodservice, he tells us.

"It has done very well in certain foodservice sectors. There are massive sections of the market who just don't like big brands, and this brand does fit the niche of the urban hipster style, matched with coffee that measures up to the standard of the roasters who are generally seen to fit that sector.

"This is never going to be a brand which will swamp the marketplace, but we do now have Grumpy Mule business in contract catering, cafes, and the licensed trade - we have opened up some decent business in pubs."



*The Grind site which is up for a design award*

## Coffee houses make the design awards shortlist

The Grind chain is attempting to raise funds on Crowdcube to fund its expansion across the capital. Investors are offered eight per cent annual interest for supporting owners Kaz James and David Abrahamovitch. The chain proposes to open a site which incorporates a roastery, a central kitchen, and its sixth coffee bar, all in one. By mid-June, 47 investors had pledged £266,000 of the initial £750,000 target.

Elsewhere, Grind is one of three coffee houses to be shortlisted in this year's Restaurant and Bar design awards, probably the trade's best showing since the awards began. Together with Grind, Curators is on the shortlist, as is Coffee Ground, an intriguing café in a garden centre in Endsleigh, in a design which appears to be a greenhouse! Another fascinating entry is the tiered seating to be found at Biju.



*Coffee Ground (above) and Biju*



The AFP news agency has reported that the most expensive coffee in the world is no longer kopi luwak - it is Black Ivory, which is created in the north of Thailand, in a rather similar way to the cat coffee, except that the animals involved are elephants. The rarity of the coffee, it is reported, has raised the price to \$500 per pound. The man who invented the idea says that he originally intended to produce kopi luwak cat coffee, but that as this novelty product has become better known, more producers have come into the market, and the quality has dropped. Rather more admirably, he has pointed out that it is not possible to factory-farm and force-feed elephants.



There has been widespread disbelief at the item which recently cropped up at a stall at a county fair in San Diego, California. ... deep-fried Starbucks coffee.



# Kaldi

Apparently, so we are told by those in the area, deep-fried novelty foods are a regular feature of these fairs, and this latest one was created by a company called Bacon-A-Fair. It features balls of ground coffee, deep-fried and then dusted with sugar and topped with whipped cream. As with many fairground food items, it comes on a stick.

From every report we can find, the item tastes 'as you would expect it to'. And that is apparently not a compliment.



Another café has got itself into social media trouble. This was in an un-named café in Walthamstow, where two men reportedly regularly meet for lunch - when they got the bill, they realised they had been identified by the word 'gays' written on it. Although the customers shared the experience on Twitter, they have rather generously declined to name the café on the grounds that they don't believe there was any intention to cause offence. In Italy last year, a waiter was fired for writing 'faggots' on a receipt.

The relatively sedate atmosphere of one of Cambridge's top tea gardens was disturbed last month by a naked man who burst into the business, dropped on all fours to bark at a dog, and then jumped into the river. He was eventually overcome by a police dog. The incident happened at the Orchard tea rooms, once the home of poet Rupert Brooke; a member of staff said that they are used to having famous people visit, but that this was their first naked customer.

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