

A Cup A Cup A Cup...Java Please

By Dave Preston – Guru of the Goodlife®

As the old song goes, “let’s have another cup of coffee, yes let’s have a cup of Nescafe.” But we can thank the Boston Tea Party in 1773 for making java an American beverage! The history and development of coffee is varied and interesting, involving chance occurrences, political intrigue, and the pursuit of wealth and power.

Many revolutionary upstarts began at cafes or coffeehouses. See for example the meetings of the Sons of Liberty of the American Revolution and the abortive Beer Hall Putsch by the German Nazi party in 1923. It was in coffeehouses that the Revolutionaries met, here they planned.

According to one story, the effect of coffee beans on behavior was noticed by a sheep herder from Caffa Ethiopia named Kaldi as he tended his sheep. He noticed that the sheep became hyperactive after eating the red "cherries" from a certain plant when they changed pastures. He tried a few himself, and was soon as overactive as his herd. The story relates that a monk happened by and scolded him for "partaking of the devil's fruit." However the monks soon discovered that this fruit from the shiny green plant could help them stay awake for their prayers.

Another legend gives us the name for coffee or "mocha." An Arabian was banished to the desert with his followers to die of starvation. In desperation, Omar had his friends boil and eat the fruit from an unknown plant. Not only did the broth save the exiles, but their survival was taken as a religious sign by the residents of the nearest town, Mocha. The plant and its beverage were named Mocha to honor this event.

Originally the coffee plant grew naturally in Ethiopia, but once transplanted in Arabia was monopolized by them. One early use for coffee would have little appeal today. The Galla tribe from Ethiopia used coffee, but not as a drink. They would wrap the beans in animal fat as their only source of nutrition while on raiding parties. The Turks were the first country to adopt it as a drink, often adding spices such as clove, cinnamon, cardamom and anise to the brew.

Coffee was introduced much later to countries beyond Arabia whose inhabitants believed it to be a delicacy and guarded its secret as if they were top secret military plans. Transportation of the plant out of the Moslem nations was forbidden by the government. The actual spread of coffee was started illegally. One Arab named Baba Budan smuggled beans to some mountains near Mysore, India, and started a farm there. Early in this

century, the descendants of those original plants were found still growing fruitfully in the region.

Coffee was believed by some Christians to be the devil's drink. Pope Vincent III heard this and decided to taste it before he banished it. He enjoyed it so much he baptized it, saying "coffee is so delicious it would be a pity to let the infidels have exclusive use of it."

Coffee today is grown and enjoyed worldwide, and is one of the few crops that small farmers in third-world countries can profitably export.

While there are several different coffee species, two main species are cultivated today. *Coffea arabica*, known as Arabica coffee, accounts for 75-80 percent of the world's production. *Coffea canephora*, known as Robusta coffee, accounts for about 20 percent and differs from the Arabica coffees in terms of taste. While Robusta coffee beans are more robust than the Arabica plants, but produces an inferior tasting beverage with a higher caffeine content. Both the Robusta and Arabica coffee plant can grow to heights of 30 feet if not pruned, but producing countries will maintain the coffee plant at a height reasonable for easy harvesting.

Coffee roasting is a chemical process by which aromatics, acids, and other flavor components are either created, balanced, or altered in a way that should augment the flavor, acidity, aftertaste and body of the coffee as desired by the roaster. Every coffee will taste different at different roast degrees. A roast will bring out certain nuances that will be favorable to amplify.

Carl Staub runs Agtron in Reno, NV. and is considered one of the foremost coffee roasting experts in the world. His analytical equipment is used by nine out of every ten coffee roasters around the globe. "It's all about the roasting...and it used to be done by the seat of the pants. Agtron has an engineering solution to properly roast coffee and depending on the bean, you can achieve the greatest flavors with an exacting science of roasting," said the master.

For proper extraction, it is essential to grind coffee properly. Freshly grinding the beans before brewing coffee is one of the most important steps for achieving a quality cup of coffee. Coffee should not be ground more than 2 minutes before brewing or major staling (oxidation) begins to take place.

There are two main types of coffee bean grinders available. Blade coffee grinders sell for about \$20, grind the bean unevenly, and are messy. Burr coffee grinders, are about \$60-\$125, grind evenly, and are clean and easy. Keeping the grinder clean makes sure you get the freshest coffee grind. The extra investment is one of the best you will make, as burr grinders improve both the coffee quality and the ease of brewing.

The right way to make that perfect cup of coffee is something Carl Staub knows and the right pot type makes a difference. "The sad truth about most types of coffee makers in

this country, particularly any that use paper filters in, you lose a lot of the flavor and body of the coffee. Paper keeps the lipids from passing through and that affects the body and flavor and short changes the drink big time. But since not that many people have the palate for coffee, they really don't know what they are missing. The best way to make coffee is using a French press...it gets the best extraction....you need about a 20% extraction from the coffee for the best taste. And, don't forget, good coffee starts with good water," the expert palate notes.

Not to be discouraged over the finer points of making coffee and to give hope to those who have got their "pot" already broken in, here's how to make the best possible cup of coffee under the circumstances using what you already have sitting on the kitchen counter.

The French press offers unparalleled flavor due to perfect extraction time and delivery of the volatile oils that are often trapped in paper filters. A French press is also the least expensive coffee brewer available. To make coffee in a French press: boil the correct amount of water, freshly grind the coffee beans using a course setting, remove the plunger, place the coffee grounds at the bottom of the glass, add the hot water, stir by shaking, and after 4-5 minutes press the plunger down to separate the grounds from the extracted coffee. Note: You do not want to pour boiling water directly onto the coffee. The goal is to brew coffee at a temperature between 197-204°F.

Unfortunately, French press coffee makers are not quite as convenient as a drip coffee makers due to preparation time and cleaning time. The French press also loses heat faster than some other methods, but extraction at slightly varying temperatures will promote a more dynamic and complex cup of coffee. To minimize heat loss effects, Bodum has developed an insulated coffee press. This press is highly recommended for both design and attention to coffee brewing details.

A novel integrated electric water heater-French press is available from Chef's Choice. This French press minimizes the complexity of using multiple devices to boil and then brew the coffee. We use it daily at the Coffee Research Institute and highly recommend it for those who want to simplify the brewing process without sacrificing quality.

The vacuum coffee pot is a clever device invented by Robert Napier in 1840 that prepares an exceptional cup of coffee with a potent aroma. This is an appropriate alternative for those who have an aversion to the taste of the paper filters from drip brewers or for people who dislike the sediment in the bottom of the cup from the French press method.

To brew coffee in a vacuum pot, add the proper amount of filtered water to the bottom bulb, attach the filter to the upper bulb and fit the upper glass bulb tightly over the bottom glass bulb. Place the vacuum coffee pot on the stove, making sure that the bottom bulb is completely dry on the outside. Use a medium grind and add the grounds when the water begins to fill the upper chamber. Leave the pot on the stove for 3.5 minutes and then place on a hot pad. Within 30 seconds the lower pot will cool enough to form a vacuum to pull the brewing coffee into the lower chamber, thereby separating it from the grounds.

Experiment with the heating and cooling cycles until the total extraction time is between 4-5 minutes

The easiest way to brew coffee is by using an automatic drip coffee brewer. Unfortunately, few coffee machines brew at the right temperature for the correct amount of time. To brew coffee in a drip brewer, place a thick paper filter in the brewing cone (basket) and thoroughly wet with water. This helps remove the paper taste from the filter. Then freshly grind the coffee using a medium grinder setting. As the water begins to boil, pour the coffee into the coffee filter. Now as the water pours over the coffee, shake the basket to ensure an even extraction. Brew time and temperature are taken care of automatically. If your brewer has a hot plate under a glass carafe, remove the carafe after the coffee is fully brewed to prevent the coffee from burning.

Making espresso is a bit more difficult than the above brewing methods and having the right equipment is essential. One personal note from a long time relationship with my espresso machine – and I've had several – all metal is the only type to buy. The plastic one die a quick death and forget about the flavor. Good ones do cost a pretty penny but at the end of the day they last longer and provide the cup you seek!

Storing coffee, according to our expert, is simple, "The only way to store coffee is to keep it in a cool, dark place like a cupboard in an air tight container. But you don't put it in the refrigerator or freeze it because the condensation will destroy the flavors. Darker roast coffees tend to get stale quicker. This type of good quality coffee will only last about a week and a half. Most roast last up to three weeks. You should only buy the amount of coffee you're going to use for the week and that how you will get the best flavor and the best experience."

Who knows how to really drink and enjoy a cup of coffee? The Italians have perfect the art of drinking coffee and of course, they invented espresso. But the science and the art are very present in this country and a lot of the world is paying attention to the ability to change the Americans offer. The Italians are very traditional and don't tend to want to vary from what they've done in the past.

From the land of tulips, says Staub, comes the coffee drinking aficionados. "The Dutch drink more coffee per capita and truly enjoy it. The Americans are into quantity and the stimulant. It's amazing the Americans will spend hours picking apart a wine and talking about the nuances and come up with 100 adjectives yet when it comes to coffee, pass the cream and sugar and down the hatch. Coffee has as much, if not more to offer, than wine. When it comes to complexity and layers of flavor, it really is a remarkable beverage".

It is part of the history of the world. Kings, Queens, Emperors, sailors, just plain folks have quaffed this black beverage. And think back to the days in college when you were pulling the all-nighter...what was it that got you through? Or when you were walking the floor, waiting for the first child. When you needed something to warm you up on that cold winter's night. Joe, java, mud it has many names and many songs have been written

and even some with a romantic twist...I've got a mission, it's just a simple thing; I've only one ambition, to have the right to bring you; your coffee in the morning; and kisses in the night...a cup, a cup, a cup, a cup...java. Carpe Diem my friends and make it a point to go out and live the goodlife!

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