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COFFEE HOUSE



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August 2011

Clinton aide for Starbucks

The general press has had some fun with the news that the new head of Starbucks in the UK will be a former aide to president Clinton.

This is Kris Engskov, who was Clinton's personal aide for three years, and is said to be the inspiration for the character Charlie Young in the *West Wing* television series – some press stories have said that he met with the actor who was to play the part, to give guidance and suggestions.

Engskov, who takes over from Darcy Willson-Rymer in the UK in September, has told *Coffee House* that he is looking forward to being involved again in the British coffee trade when he moves here next month. He has previously spent two years here with Starbucks, as well as working for the chain in Switzerland and Austria.

The quirk that the financial press have not yet spotted is that while they report a "Clinton man" to be coming, the outgoing MD is taking up a post at... Clinton Cards!

Elsewhere, *Forbes* magazine has reinstated Howard Schulz, the head of Starbucks, to its list of billionaires – but only at no.840 on the list.

Meanwhile, Starbucks has announced plans to grow coffee in China, a move which has aroused the interest of several UK green-bean importers, who say that the country can produce a perfectly reasonable bean for espresso blending, and could possibly achieve a coffee industry approaching that of Brazil.

UK's town managers support a cafe society

Following our stories on the likely fate of the café trade in the forthcoming Portas report to government, backing for the general concept of a 'café culture' in our towns has come from the professional body which represents town centre management. The Association of Town Centre Management has said that it supports coffee houses and tea-rooms, and will act as advisor and helper to cafes trying to fight council bureaucracy in such matters as outdoor tables and chairs.

There are, says the ACTM, more benefits to a café culture than the obvious ones.

"We are supportive of the growth of café culture," ACTM chairman Graham Chase told *Coffee House*. "We think tables and chairs creating an al-fresco environment have added an extra dimension providing a good reason for consumers to spend longer in town centres.

"A café culture reduces the pressure on transport infrastructure during peak times, by keeping people in town and spreading return journeys home over a longer period, and consequently providing additional spend for all sectors on the high street. It provides a good transition from the daytime economy to the night-time economy."

However, he accepts, there are still hurdles between café operators and councils.

"Every council's attitude is different – one application from a coffee shop can trigger the involvement of so many departments that it can be a very time-consuming and cumbersome procedure."

Some problems may have come from councils' experience of cafe owners setting up outdoor furniture thoughtlessly, says the ACTM – congestion of narrow pavements, encroachment on neighbouring frontages, hazards to the disabled, litter and spillage, and even environmentally-unfriendly heaters and damage to pavements by the wrong furniture, have all caused problems.

"However, the response of some councils does sometimes appear to be cumbersome and unthinking," said Graham Chase. "If there is no single point of contact for cafe businesses, then we can understand the frustration some operators may feel.

"This is one reason why we encourage local authorities to consider the positive contribution a café culture can make. Invariably, our council-employed

town centre managers will be happy to act as a liaison for businesses to help resolve these issues.

"The essence of town centre management is getting local government, businesses and residents to work in partnership better. We encourage café culture, and we understand that some councils respond better than others to make this happen.



"Consult your town centre manager" - Graham Chase

"If our town centre managers were consulted on a more regular basis, and their expertise utilised, we feel a more effective approach to this subject would arise and reduce bureaucracy and inconsistency.

"We are here to help on this vital and sometimes controversial subject."

In the most recent disputes, a council in Langport, Somerset, ordered the removal of all A-boards from all kinds of business, including the Famous Parrett café. Owner Shelley Giles turned to an idea used by other cafes, a branded pushbike chained to railings, but within 48 hours was told to remove that as well. She said: "It is ridiculous - it's summer and no-one knows that we are open. Even regulars think we are closed."

Local traders have now formed a business group, and have already held an 'Independent Traders Day' to promote the value of local business.

In Chippenham, even the president of the chamber of commerce has applied for a late-night restaurant licence at his tea rooms, blaming a council increase in car park charges for putting town trade down by twenty per cent.

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SAY FRESH ROAST COFFEE... AND MEAN IT!

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Costa has created a 'new and unique' coffee, which went on sale in its stores last month. The Costa Light uses a technique described as 'adding Costa's Mocha Italia espresso to skimmed milk in its own jug, and frothing, to create a milder, well-balanced, light, yet indulgent coffee'. The result is said to be less than 80 calories.

Taylor Street Baristas of London are to be the first independent coffee shop in the Canary Wharf financial district. The new opening will be the company's seventh site. Canary Wharf has a growing working population, expected to hit 100,000 next year, and has only recently begun to develop as a bar, restaurant and café scene - a few years ago, the speciality coffee trade there was confined to in-house espresso bars in the flash office suites.

The Swiss discount grocer Denner has now said it will stop selling compatible capsules that fit Nespresso machines, following the latest in a long line of appeals which rules for the giant brand. The story is not yet over - yet another appeal is to come!

Douwe Egberts is reported to have created the first 'mood-based' instant coffee. It is being sold in Sainsburys.

The Manchester Food and Drink festival, which uses the slogan 'Manchester born and fed', has six local coffee houses in its awards shortlist - the Chocolate Café, Jack Spratt, Kebabish, North Tea Power, Tampopo and Teacup on Thomas

Street. An interesting condition in the awards is that a winner cannot enter the contest again the following year, to ensure variety.

Bean Coffee of Liverpool has moved into Manchester with the opening of two new coffee shops in the Victoria and Quay West office buildings within MediaCityUK, Manchester. Bean's first outlet was cited in the Independent as one of the UK's top coffee shops.

Coffee Republic in Scunthorpe has stopped trading after reportedly forfeiting its lease. A spokesman for the Parishes shopping centre confirmed that the premises had been taken over by 'peaceable re-entry' and that a new tenant is now being sought.

British Food Fortnight runs from Sept 17 to Oct 2 - although it is going to be unlikely to see British-grown coffee promoted, virtually everything else in a coffee-house or tea-room qualifies for being promoted, most notably milk. (The 3663 wholesaler has observed that the top three best-selling British dishes are now the full English breakfast, sausage and mash, and fish and chips).

Large companies that fail to pay their small suppliers on time will be 'named and shamed' online, the government has said - small business owners will be able to complain anonymously if they require, and the names of late-paying big companies will be published on the Cabinet Office website.

Sun-powered brewing for coffee carts

The solar-powered tea cart has arrived in India. Street vendors brewing char are common throughout India, many of them brewing over open wood fires, but inventor Chris Green of Michigan has now adapted traditional vending barrows with a 'low-tech solar hot water system', which is made up of a copper water coil, some piping, insulation, and a solar panel. The vendor adjusts the solar panel to the best angle of the sun, and the heated water is piped to a worktop, where it can either be used to keep foods hot, or for brewing beverages.



"The cart is meant to be a more sustainable alternative," Chris told *Coffee House*. "Currently, most vendors heat beverages by boiling water or milk in a pot on a conventional propane-gas burner. Using the solar system can save street vendors money by saving propane for night time when there is no sun to heat the liquids."

The Irish roaster Bewley's has spoken of a new push into the UK market, and has devised a new packaging. It is using Ziploc bags, which it says is a 'first' for a mainstream fresh coffee brand, and more convenient than other methods of re-sealing packs. The company says: "all you have to do is zip your finger across the top of the bag and it's resealed without the need for clothes pegs, clips, elastic bands or stickers." Mark Saunders, general manager of Bewley's retail division is the man modelling the family-size version.



Cafe2U expands to the USA

The mobile coffee franchise Cafe2U, which trades from vans in the UK, is to expand to America - after three years' planning, including piloting the idea on the west coast, managing director Tom Acland has told *Coffee House* that he has now signed up major franchise partners and developers to promote the idea into fifty territory areas.

"We have shown the Americans that there is more to life than Starbucks and filter coffee!" he said. "The US market has many significant opportunities. The most interesting part of the study was to understand that Americans readily accept the concept of having espresso coffee made fresh for them outside their workplace." In the UK, Cafe2U has said that its first five franchisees, having now reached their first five years in business, have all renewed their agreements for the same period. The chain now has 55 vans working in the UK and Ireland.

Correspondence

Let's have a consistent filter dosage

It has needed to be said and repeated - you, with David Warr, seem to have got to the nub of it and have put the words together most relevantly (*Coffee House, July*)

The heating element technology of filter-brew machines has improved immensely of late but re-starting properly, from scratch, cannot be beaten once it is acknowledged that the re-start requires fresh, once-boiled water with a small but definite level of hardness.

But if only circa 50 per cent of the recommended coffee dosage rate is mixed in, the nett result/taste is unlikely to be anything other than (often scorchingly) hot, brown water. Michal Klimes, the last chairman of Thomas & Green Ltd., always said that a filter coffee can be anything you want it to be, almost as strong as an espresso if you add enough ground coffee-active-ingredient + fresh boiling water ... preferably through one of his filter papers.

Whilst admitting to the same professional bias, I couldn't agree more; serving up stewed dishwasher has helped give British filter coffee a bad image since rationing... and, remarkably, made it easier to increase profitability by means of the 28gm/3pint dosage rate. Let us join in promoting consistent use of David Warr's 80gm dosage rate!

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Dogs in cafes - watch your signage

The matter of dogs in cafes has raised its head again, now with the question of complaints against cafe owners who have told customers: 'you can't bring a dog in here, it's against the law'. That, it has been confirmed, may get a cafe into hot water with the trading standards people.

The Dog-Friendly Britain organisation has confirmed to us that the Food Standards Agency has no printed regulations, and advises only that the rule seems to be that dogs should not be allowed in areas where food is prepared... but it is fine for them to be in the area where the food is actually served, unless there is a specific local authority rule to the contrary.

Ann Croft of Dog-Friendly Britain has said that every proprietor has the right to choose whether or not they want to allow dogs, but the big problem exists when café owners say things like: 'we can't have dogs because of EEC rules'. There is, we are advised, no such regulation.

Under the current EU legislation, dogs are not allowed in areas where food is being prepared but, as long as the proprietor follows standard hygiene practices, there is nothing to prevent dogs being in places where food is



This is a sign we snapped on a cafe door - 'due to health and safety legislation, dogs are not permitted inside the cafe'. But a cafe owner could be in trouble for saying so.

served. Whether a dog is allowed in a cafe, bar or restaurant is up to the sole discretion of the owner.

One of the recent spats over the matter came when it was believed that EU rules would prevent dogs being even on the premises in B&B establishments. After an outcry in the UK, the Euromyths organisation successfully debunked it, as their 'myth no 169'.

Havana Coffee of Barnstaple are to launch a new retail and foodservice coffee range under the title of 'Barista Coffee Buoy' - it is, says Nigel Shapland, "a real gutsy espresso, just as you would expect on the north shores of Devon!"



A company is now making tabletops from recycled coffee grounds. "We collect and recycle coffee waste, mix it with recycled plastics, and then press it into hard surfacing called Curface," says Adam Fairweather, managing director of Re-worked Ltd. "Working it with regular hand tools is easy; it's heat-stable up to 90c and can take flash exposure to 100c. The life expectancy is good - if left outside a coffee shop, I would guess at four or five years. Damage restoration is simple." There seems to be a demand - the factory is busy, and has a 12-week lead time.

The new owners of the Layton Ferns company have re-named it Ferns Coffee, have acquired Coffee Mill Trading of Dorset, along the south coast, and have launched their new brand, Sassetta Espresso.

Central Bean is opening its fourth branch at the new Newcastle University Business School. The coffee shop will open in time for the 2011-12 academic year.

The My Coffee Stop café, on Enfield Chase railway station, is holding a Summertime Exhibition, selling handmade cards in support of the local Chickenshed Theatre group, and is also giving 50p from each of its own smoothies to the cause. The local Fairtrade directory, produced by the café, will be published in August.

Cherizena, the specialist supplier of flavoured coffee, has opened its first

coffee-house under its own name. It is in Clacton-on-Sea, run by the brand's local sales agents Sue and Len Lane.

Mint Urban Technologies of the Far East has launched a takeaway coffee cup lid which is 'enhanced' with an aroma which boosts that of the drink being sold. Popular rumour, of course, says that a similar technique has long been used in instant coffee jars.



The La Marzocco espresso machine company says it has created something new in portafilters - it has launched the stainless-steel filter, featuring snap-on double or single spouts. The entire portafilter is, says the company, ten per cent lighter than current models, which are made from cast brass which is machined and plated.

The winter Tea & Coffee Festival will be held at the South Bank Centre in London on the 18-20th November. Organiser Yael Rose says it should be bigger and better than her quite well-regarded spring event there.

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The latest creative move in the outdoor furniture situation appears to have come from Reading, where the council has said it will cut fees by half for cafes outside the inner distribution road - businesses in the town centre will still pay the full charge of £234 plus £61 per table.

The operator of the Castle Rock View cafe in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh, has been threatened with closure for continuing to trade despite permission being rejected in February, and an appeal rejected in May. The council planning department has recommended that action be taken to remove the unauthorised tables, chairs and cooking facilities. Neighbouring businesses lodged objections to the café selling hot food for sit-in consumption in premises which had been licensed as a take-away.

The latest stage in the espresso-safety investigation is that the HSE has now created a new section of its website to cover the matter: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pressure-systems/index.htm>. One of the various engineering firms now taking part in consultations with the HSE has remarked that there 'are still a few ambiguous references'.

An inconvenient complaint has been made against a coffee-house - an objection to the noise of coffee being ground! Nick Green of Jittermugs in Faversham had applied for a drinks licence, to which a resident objected, citing as a sound nuisance the noise of a coffee grinder. The environmental health officer supported the objection... but the licence was granted, subject to improved sound insulation.

The former postal sorting office in Stamford is to become a coffee shop - the Cosy Cafe is due to open later this year. In Nottingham, an application has been made to convert a 'dilapidated' office unit in Cobden Chambers for use as a café.

The Honey B coffee shop in Sudbury, Suffolk, which opened last month, had an unusual inspiration - the owner suffered a stroke, which put an end to her former career as a hairdresser. While recuperating, she decided to turn to the career she had always intended.

Nominations for the best Fairtrade café in Belfast, part of the city's Fairtrade awards, are open to the end of August. Last year's winner was the Common Grounds coffee house, whose menu includes the Achocalypse Now ('a mocha latte with a heart of darkness') and the Al Paccinno (an almond cappuccino).

In the first six months of this year, sales of Utz-certified Good Inside coffee rose by 38 per cent over last year's performance. Utz says that sales of its certified robusta have shown a notable increase. The performance of Utz-certified cocoa and tea are both well up.

One of the world's most expensive coffees is now available in a decaf-feinated version - for the first time, Jamaica Blue Mountain coffee has been processed with the Swiss Water technique, and is on sale through Sea Island Coffees of London.

Magrini is offering a free paper cup starter pack with every Vitamix blender order placed during August. The pack contains a selection of 12oz, 16oz and 20oz candy stripe smoothie/shake cups with neon straws and dome lids.

A team from United Coffee will cycle from London to Paris in aid of the Poppy Appeal this September. To celebrate the re-launch of its Lyons coffee brand, United Coffee will also give three pence to the cause from every pack sold.

Starbucks have moved into the coffee-kiosk sector with a trial run in a Marriott hotel in Indianapolis. The site is intended to target convention-goers, an extremely big business in American hotels.

A one-metre high fibreglass ice cream cone has been stolen from outside the Ice Cream and Coffee Pot cafe in Ellon, Aberdeenshire.

Ground Espresso Bars of Belfast has won the Northern Bank Business Growth award. The judges said: "Ground have created a niche and developed a new brand to Northern Ireland in a very competitive sector and in an economic downturn... they demonstrate a very clear strategic vision, and a high degree of innovation in a crowded market full of strong multinationals."

Kate Butler and Dave Conroy have launched Brewsmiths Coffee & Tea in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter by telling the local press that they want to support a national drive to preserve traditional shopping centres and independent shops.

Smiths Coffee of Apsley has produced a special coffee to be sold for the Hospice of St Francis. It was at first available in the hospice's seven shops and now on Ebay.

Butlins and SSP have chosen the Soho Coffee Company as their preferred brand partner to deliver kids' menu offerings.

The team from Devonshire Tea of Plymouth are to make an attempt on the Guinness World Record for making the most cups of tea in one hour. The record is held by an X-factor singer, Olly Murs, with 491. The attempt will be at the Plymouth Flavour Fest at 2pm on 19th August. Guinness have told us that the record requires three different teas to be used, and each tea should steep at a different time and temperature. The cups used must be a minimum of 5oz, and the tea pots used cannot contain more than 4 servings.

Costa runs into anti-chain petitions

Costa is being opposed by both paper and online petitions over plans to open in Gloucester Road, Bristol. The local traders' association says that it does not support planning applications from chains, and that the area's customers do not want their street 'looking like any other high street in the country'.

The local press has reported a strong war of words - the hopeful Costa franchisee has allegedly claimed to have received 'grossly unfair hostility and threats from people looking to protect their own businesses'. In opposition, one shop-keeper alleges that she in turn was visited by representatives of the applicants, demanding to know why she had placed an anti-Costa petition in her window.

Elsewhere, Costa Coffee has applied to open in a grade II-listed property in Derby. The building in St Peter's St dates from 1912, and is known for statues of historical Derby figures, in small alcoves looking outward on the first floor. It was designed by Jessie Boot, who founded the chain of chemists.

Sheffield name returns to the street

A Sheffield roaster has re-opened his café business in a new and on-trend format, some months after closing some months ago while complaining of 'intolerable delays to the regeneration of the city centre'.

Simon Bower of the Pollards roastery has re-opened on a new site in Ecclesall Road, in partnership with someone who worked in the old café for 26 years. "The whole premise is not to have a café as such!" he told Coffee House. "We had a thousand emails from customers when we closed the café, and you can't overlook that kind of pressure. Now, we're in a small boutique-shopping area, and our offer is purely tea and coffee, no sandwiches, no soft drinks. We say you can have any coffee you want, made as espresso, filter or siphon, from a range of 48."

Another London cafe guide

Another guide to cafes in London has been produced - and this one is a little more specialist than most, but has some very useful content.

As is often said by authors, this was produced after the writer experienced a particularly bad tea experience, and could not find any good directories to

show her where good tea and cake could be found - and the result is indeed more detailed, in practical information of what cafes serve, than many such books (and perhaps not surprisingly as this one comes from the publisher of the daddy of them all, Adrian Maddox's great book *Classic Cafes*.



Despite the title, some of London's notable espresso bars crop up, but it is refreshing that they are in there for their cakes, and not their coffee.

This is a quite remarkably detailed account of a vast amount of tea, coffee and cake venues, many of which you would be extremely lucky to find without being guided to them.

Tea & Cake London, by Zena Alkayat, will be published by Black Dog in September, at £9.99.

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Britvic recruits the knockers to go for the 'cold hot drinks' sector

Britvic is focussing its biggest consumer sampling campaign on Lipton Ice Tea, citing rapid growth in the 'cold hot drinks' sector.

The company says that this sector shot up by 92 per cent in value last year, following their 'don't knock it until you've tried it' campaign – it is claimed to have overtaken the smoothie sector. Britvic, which bottles the product under licence, is attempting to reach three million consumers in sampling.

The promotion will involve Britvic setting up 'knockers' games in nine city centres. Knockers is a Scandinavian game, like a giant pool table with balls the size of bowls.

Unilever, owner of the Lipton brand, is also to launch a new coffee-based ice-cream drink, Cafe Zero, aimed at 'young urbanites' and packaged in 200ml 'coffee-style lidded cups'.

(The Britvic soft drinks report for 2011 is available on PDF from the editor).

Top coffee for top thinkers

There was an interesting collection of coffee-makers in Edinburgh last month, for a most unusual conference. The global TED conference is for thinkers in all subjects - a 'global ideas-fest' in which intellectuals get to present 'ideas worth sharing' on virtually any topic.

The Coffee Common organisation stepped in to provide the catering, bringing together a collection of the UK's top baristas, using a selection of top coffees and state-of-the-art equipment, and generally promote the concept of speciality coffee.

Marco Beverages contributed an Uber Brewer, coffee came from Square Mile, and even new products were used – Coffee Hit let the baristas use their black Teflon-coated steaming



jugs, so new that they are not on general sale yet.

One international newspaper reported being told by a delegate: "It's the first conference I've been to with decent coffee".

Copyright watchdogs apologise to cafe owner

A very curious legal incident has happened at the Monkey Café in Swansea. The owners were banned from playing recorded music in a court case brought by the PPL licensing authority - and the first owners Paul Dyke and Amanda Davey knew of it was from their evening paper, which said that they were also due to pay costs of £1,500. It appears that the PPL believed the Monkey had outstanding licence fees to pay, but went straight to court instead of asking for the money. The PPL has now acknowledged its mistake.

There is a coffee element to the new contest being run by the YBF, the Young British Foodies, to identify and recognise the up-and-coming stars in various forms of food and drink. In the 2011-2012 YBF awards, there is now a separate section for coffee, which will be judged by Gwilym Davies, the UK's 2009 world barista champion. Entry is by a 500-word essay. Details: <http://the-ybfs.com/>



A mobile espresso bar converted from a Volkswagen Transporter has opened up in north Devon. It is the Volks Café, run by Colin Swift, who now says that he serves 'one of the five best espressos in north Devon'. The van operates six days a week, and is decorated by a local artist to show a view overlooking the North Devon coast.

The coffee-themed musical Cappuccino Girls, which was originally planned to have its stage debut to coincide with the 2010 world barista championships in London, has returned to the industry with the playwright seeking to launch the show to coincide with coffee events, probably in or near his native Wales. The musical was written by Mal Pope, and has been described as a kind of coffee-themed girls' night out. Its plot features the barista championships (and a local champion barista did help with the details). The playwright is seeking to tie in with either the next barista championships or with coffee exhibitions. In response to a straightforward question from *Coffee House*, he replied that no, he is not simply looking for a sponsor with a cheque-book! The editor will pass on any interest.

The latest in a series of catering entrepreneurs taking over disused public conveniences and turning them into cafes is the Drovers Return, in Hunsbury Hill Country Park, Northampton. Colin Ingle came across the run-down block while walking his dog, and invested £25,000 in the conversion. In a delightful but probably unintentional turn of phrase, the local media said: 'when plans for the conversion were first announced, there were fears that it would become a magnet for vandals, and 430 of them complained to the local council'.



Kaldi

A claim to the 'most inaccessible café in the UK' comes from 950 metres up, on the third-highest peak in England – it is just a tarpaulin windbreak on the summit plateau of Helvellyn, where two brothers are selling hot drinks and bacon rolls. They camp at the foot of the hill and climb every day to open up. The Lake District National Park authority has acknowledged that as a 'temporary development', they can trade for 28 days without permission, but some of the hillwalkers' organisations have got extremely uppity about the venture, complaining about spoiling of the natural environment and health hazards. Experienced hillwalkers say that mountain-top cafes are not new - apart from the widely-reported recent development on Snowdon, there was once a café at the top of Ben Nevis, but it closed in 1904.

The food standards authorities in New Zealand have issued a warning against two instant coffee products which supposedly 'enhance male energy'. Drinks called Sexpresso and Rock Hard are reported to contain a version of Viagra, in spite of a ban on the addition of such drugs to food.

For those of us who get over-excited about being in a cool, burgeoning industry, here's a timely reminder from the *Washington Post*. One of their columnists wrote this month: "In the 1990s, I worked for a glossy, beautifully designed magazine, all about what was then the red-hot beverage trend: gourmet coffee. It's easy to laugh about it now, but back in those heady days, coffee was sexy. By 1998, the red-hot lust for gourmet coffee information had cooled – the sort of people who breathe life into lifestyle trends had begun to get bored and look elsewhere for whatever it is that drives lifestyle trends." It's a chilling thought that all of us may some day repeat those words: 'back in those heady days, coffee was sexy...'

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The phenomenon of online presentations and publishing has rather crept up on the trade in recent years... it began when online coffee blogs developed into video, YouTube, and Vimeo.

Some, particularly the American ones, are awfully over-produced... and some instruction videos are quite hysterically awful in being under-produced. You can generally tell which kind you are going to get in the opening seconds, particularly if you see endless 'meaningfully-atmospheric' shots of espresso dripping into cups, accompanied by horrifyingly cheesy music.

But this is the new way of communicating, and it has its real pioneers.

The man who broke the mould of these videos, and created a whole new genre, is a British roaster – he is Steve Leighton of Has Bean in Stafford, who has developed a string of deliberately under-produced yet watchable home videos, beginning with the *In My Mug* series in which he sits in front of a camera and discusses a coffee from his range. It has reached 142 episodes, and built a phenomenal following.

He followed this up with *Tamper Tantrums*, in which he and Irish champion barista Colin Harmon 'hang out' and debate coffee trade issues in what is sometimes an over-casual format – there is virtually no editing at all, and there are spells of silence and giggling, but the result regularly reaches five thousand fans.

And then, boldly, Leighton and Harmon took the *Tantrums* live, as a new kind of coffee event. The crazy idea, explains Leighton, was of an informal get-together where half a dozen experienced people from the trade had 20 minutes to talk on a trade topic of their choosing, informally, before an audience of just a hundred coffee enthusiasts, trade and otherwise.

It worked – Harmon provided the home of his 3FE coffee bar in Dublin, various speakers gave their time, and the event sold out without any publicity at all, in a matter of days.

And now, says Leighton, it points the way to an intriguing philosophy in coffee-bar work – nobody is an outsider. Nobody is excluded, and we are all in



A typical Leighton production - *In My Roastery*

The online coffee community

The coffee trade community is here to take part in, if you want it, says Steve Leighton of Has Bean – the online world has opened it up for everyone.

All you have to do is take advantage of it

this together, with no barrier to communications.

"The *Tamper Tantrums* all came from the idea of a couple of mates talking," he told *Coffee House*. "We now get five or six thousand downloads for each episode... and three quarters of a million have watched me drink coffee in *In My Mug*, which is humbling. And the reason people like it is because it is not over-produced.

"We didn't promote the Live event at all. The word spread, and we had people from Russia and Germany there; one guy from Australia heard about it in

Germany, and diverted his trip to Ireland to come. That was ace!"

All this helps to spread the coffee 'community', and that is a subject about which Leighton gets quite surprisingly vehement.

It has long been said that there is too little contact between individual coffee shop owners – one of the traditional beliefs of the trade is that, just like the universal human desire to own a coffee shop or tea room, those who do are 'lonely'. It is true that being an independent entrepreneur can be a solitary business, and many proprietors have complained that they have no human company to talk to (apart from suppliers' reps, many of whom don't fall into that category!).

Leighton has very little sympathy for this received wisdom, which now goes down as 'urban myth'. It is no longer, he says, difficult to find 'life beyond the shop', to use a phrase from champion barista Gwilym Davies (who also described it as: 'the realisation that there are other lunatics like us out there!')

"I get really annoyed with people saying 'it's lonely out here', because today it's easier to share in this trade than it ever was," says Leighton. We're in Stafford, which is the back end of anywhere so far as coffee is concerned, but I have friends all over the world. Don't sit there crying about it, because you can do it... sure, to maintain a relationship with someone outside your immediate circle takes effort. But you can do it."

Until very recently, it was also well known that a lot of independent coffee shops (and particularly tea-rooms) were not computerised at all... that, too, has changed radically, but still, for every roaster/barista who 'tweets' and the like, there are several dozen who simply don't have time for that kind of activity.

This too gets little sympathy from the Tantrum-maker.

"I don't care if there's still a coffee shop in the middle of nowhere that still doesn't have a computer! You can now get into all of this content by walking into a mobile phone shop!

"The question is now not whether you 'can' be involved, but whether you can be bothered to. And it is no longer a question of whether you 'want' to, it's soon going to be a question of 'have' to.

"You can no longer complain that you're not involved in anything or not part of anything, don't cry about not having a girlfriend if you can't be bothered to get out to the pub and meet one. And the great thing about all this contact is... it's free!"

Another annoying myth which crept into the coffee trade a few years ago was the concept that certain baristas, roasters, and coffee-bars constitute an 'elite'. Many media still try to create an image of 'super-cool' coffee shops and baristas.

The glossy magazines have even now turned to giving certain roasteries, notably Square Mile and Leighton's

own Has Bean business, the same kind of cult status.

In fact, most of those who have reached recognition in the coffee trade go out of their way to avoid the concept of elitism, and the notable thing about the Live presenta-

tions was that there was absolutely none of it at all.

"The rockstar barista exists in nobody's head except those who think they are one!" laughs Leighton. "I once saw a team of Japanese cameramen following James Hoffmann (our world champ in 2007) around, because they thought he was one... he didn't, of course.

"I don't believe Has Bean is in the same category, because they get the girls and I just get the geeks! But the real reason we all get so much atten-



A typical *In My Mug* scene from the Has Bean roastery

Just how much does the coffee-shop trade embrace the 'social media' methods? Simon Jenner of Urban Coffee in Birmingham has been looking into it, and counting how many followers certain businesses have on Twitter.

His own business has 2,413 followers, closely followed by Kaffeine of London and North Tea Power of Manchester. Dose and Nude of London, and Coffee#1 of Wales both have well over 1,500 followers, and Prufrock in London has over a thousand. This compares with one and a half million for Starbucks, but more tellingly, 2,903 followers for Costa. The conclusion, it appears, is that independents generally use social media more and better than the giants, but even so, Simon is surprised at the number of coffee-houses who do not appear in the Twitter system at all.

For himself, he says, he doesn't 'promote' it as such: "we have live Twitter screens in Emporiums so people can see their own tweets or ours. But we don't follow lots of people as a tactic to get them to follow us. So we believe 80 per cent of our followers have actually been into Urban Coffee."

Tantrums go live

tion is because we all work hard. I haven't had a holiday in eleven years."

The real truth about the trade 'community', says Steve Leighton, is that it is truly open. Those who have reached the heights are more enthusiastic about bringing new friends into the trade than in staying aloof.

"Today, I've got an email in front of me, from a guy I've never heard of, with a problem, asking if I can help. Yes, I will. I get 300 emails a day, and I answer them all, and the same goes for the top baristas."

History proves the value, he says.

"I had my first contact with Colin Harmon, who ended up as a champion barista, before I realised it. He was working in finance, and wrote to ask how he could learn about roasting coffee. I sent him a long reply, and didn't think about it again... the next time we met, he was going in for the world championship, and asked if I would help him with his coffee.

"All these contacts should be valued, and we should all answer questions. If someone shows interest, you should reward it with an interested reply.

"I am not alone in wanting to bring more and more people into this 'circle'. We all enjoy it when more people are involved. We don't want to be geeks in our own little cave."

Entertainingly, the principle of getting more out of something, the more you put into it, extends to Has Bean's own coffee. Steve Leighton roasts with an independent attitude which occasionally goes against accepted thinking, and produces some distinctive coffees with distinctive names. His Jailbreak blend has something to do with a previous career as a prison officer; the Jabberwocky blend is an oblique reference to his favourite football team, Sunderland. Apparently Lewis Carroll wrote the poem in that very town.

The Jailbreak blend comes with the remark that 'an espresso blend for home users should be good in other brew methods, and good across a range of temperatures and extraction times; it should be that forgiving'. The idea of a blend good for everyone from the home user right up to commercial coffee-shop use is unusual thinking.

"Yes, I'm rather on my own with this, but I stand by it. Jabberwocky needs a certain amount of work and practice. I could make that one easier for the barista, but good things take effort to get the best out of them.

"It's exactly the same as the coffee trade 'community' question. You can't wait for everything to happen for you – but if you put in some effort, you'll find getting a lot out of it is easier than you think."

And, he added, the reach of this community is farther than you might expect: "You know it's a global world when you get an e-mail from a farmer to say he just watched me presenting an *In My Mug* - about his own coffee!"

The two star speakers at the live Tamper Tantrum event were both champion baristas, and both were speaking about one very basic down-to-earth subject – the importance of sound, basic, customer service manners in a coffee shop, and how these are so much more important than an elitist attitude.

Colin Harmon, the barista who runs the 3FE coffee bar in Dublin, spoke self-deprecatingly on 'what I know about running a coffee shop'. Much of this came from his own experience.

As a champ, Harmon's shop attracted some press interest from the foodie reviewers. This was not what he wanted: "I got very upset when I was called an 'exclusive' coffee shop. I wanted to be an 'inclusive' coffee shop!

"So I realised I had to 'set a trap' for customers, to make them want to come into my shop – I had to design the coffee shop with that aim in mind. It sounds basic, but it took me eighteen months.

"I also realised I had to 'have a story'. This won't drive your business for ever, but if people can sum up your coffee shop in one sentence, that is a good thing. I know a bookshop where, if you tell the man the last three books you enjoyed, he'll suggest a fourth based on that. There is a hairdresser who gives you a cup of apple juice... a simple thing, but people appreciate it and remember it. These are things businesses are remembered for. You need something to be 'summed up for'."

A coffee shop's attitude to customers is vital, said Harmon.

"There is a correlation between how nice you are to your customers, and how nice they are to you. If they're not nice to you, then it's you who are doing something wrong!"

To be nice to all your customers, said Harmon, prepare to be two-faced, in the nicest sense. This means appreciating that not every customer wants to be lectured about your skill in selecting the most wonderful exclusive coffee, or any of your other personal mastery. They just want 'a coffee'.

"If you build your shop to look like a regular coffee shop, and then you start talking about varieties, they'll wonder what's going on. Appreciate that some customers do just want 'a cup of coffee', give them that coffee, and let them go. Don't pontificate at them, because they make up a huge part of your business. You have to make people feel nice and enjoy their coffee, so understand which of them want to talk at length about it.

"How will you know them? Some aren't interested, and some are interested, but are too afraid to ask. So just drop something into the conversation - 'that was a Bolivian', and then leave it there. A good idea is to put a sign up on the wall saying 'ask about the Bolivian!', and if they want to, they will."

By coincidence, former world barista champion James Hoffmann, now the



Colin Harmon (above) and James Hoffmann in full Tantrum flow



owner of the Square Mile roastery in London, took exactly the same line – good customer service is not about lecturing the customer. Our trade suffers from bad attitudes, he said.

"We are living in the best possible time for enjoying coffee, but we have also generated a lot of agony with the 'hipster idiocy,'" he said. "This is down to our customer service.

"Every time I hear the phrase 'educating the customer', I die a little inside... this attitude oozes out of our business as being smug, arrogant, patronising, and off-putting. This is a bad thing.

"We get too involved in 'being coffee people'. We put a counter between us and the customer, and we become different – we are smarter and more evolved humans than you, the public. This is a dangerous attitude!

"I've even had conversations with coffee people who say 'this coffee is great, but my customers won't like it'. I think... are you insane?"

Customer service, not customer education, is the entire key to what we're here for, emphasised Hoffmann.

"A common thread through all aspects of service is 'empathy', which means thinking about what the customer needs, right now. Yes, we need our skills and knowledge, and we need to apply it when it is applicable to what the customer wants. When the customer says 'I just want a coffee', that means 'don't speak to me about what we have today'.

"Restaurants are better than we are at the non-verbal clues about how to behave. You can go into a restaurant and know instantly whether it's the kind of place where you can ask for the ketchup!

"We aren't good at this. Someone will come into a coffee house and ask for a 'twenty-ounce venti skinny soy thing', because that's how people speak in

coffee houses today. If we say 'no, we don't do that', they'll feel stupid.

"For every customer who comes in and asks for something you don't sell – it's your fault, so fix it!"

Good customer service, he said, is not about elitist perfectionism.

"I will go to a café where the brewing isn't perfect, if I like the café. But if I do not like a café, then even if their coffee is great, I will not go there. We need to keep our customers buying from us, so while good brewing is important, the service is the key to it.

"Think of three words you would like to describe your own business... then think of being outside, as a customer. Would the customer think of the same three words? If not, I suggest the reason is down to your customer service, not your product.

"Now think about businesses you like, and why you go there. I know very little about whisky, although I like it, and there is a specialist whisky bar in London where I have asked questions so stupid that other customers have audibly snorted in derision.

"But the barman did not - he never made me feel stupid, he led me to something I really enjoyed... and as a result, he liberated from my pocket twice what I had intended to spend, and made me happy to do so.

"He did not try to 'educate' me - he just made me interested enough to stay in his business.

"How can we not want our customers to be as happy as that?"



One of the most disturbing sights at the Tamper Tantrum Live was that of world champion barista Gwilym Davies, who appeared in full drag, complete with handbag and pearls... yet still wearing his beard. In this guise, he questioned the lack of female participation at the top level of the barista trade – not in any critical sense, but rather demanding the appreciation of equality in the trade. In answer to one question from the audience, he made the contentious assertion that discrimination exists, and that female barista employees receive less support from their managers than is usually given to male baristas.

The *In My Mug* videos can be found at www.inmymug.com
The *Tamper Tantrums* are at www.tampertantrum.com

Now that the standard of a venue's coffee is not the main reason for customers to choose a coffee shop, the question of customer service is coming to the fore as the differentiating factor between cafes. The interesting consequence of that is that as customer service improves, the coffee-house trade has all the more chance of being seen as a genuinely valuable part of the high-street 'retail mix' – but we still need councils to appreciate this.

The view comes from Peter Kirton, managing director of the UK operation of Esquires, the Canadian franchised coffee-house chain. He opened Britain's first Esquires store in London eleven years ago, and now has around thirty sites in operation.

Esquires is not a flashy or 'cool' brand. With some amusement, Peter Kirton acknowledges that while much has been made of industry trends that say we are now supposed to be in the third or fourth 'wave' of 'cool' coffee-houses, several online reviews of Esquires cafes around the country have included references to their relatively plain and 'uncool' exterior.

"Some of that is deliberate," says Peter Kirton. "I don't care what 'wave' of coffee-house we are – we came about to offer something in the community, other than in a city centre.

"Our founders came out of suburban Canada, and although our first shop was in London, we have grown in community-friendly venues. The actual choice of town is usually that of the franchisee, but the choice of site will be a community one.

"Those 'waves' in coffee-houses have been mostly focussed on London, but even so, I guess we're not far behind the trends, and our new site in London (in Shepherd's Bush, opposite the Westfield centre) will pick up some of that.

"However, other sites will not – one important thing we recognised very early was that we do not have to follow the same kind of trend for every shop, as some chains do. We follow the community."

Even if he does not feel inclined to chase the fashion, the 'cool café' trend has done the provincial market a lot of good, says Kirton.

"The London 'waves' have had a positive influence elsewhere, in that they have raised the standard of beverages to a very high level, and the standards of food as well, and that they have influenced the level of pride in coffee shops in general. This has influenced provincial centres, if maybe not in such an extreme way as in London, and so we can now see elements of it appearing in other cities... and we can see the big chains trying to emulate it, too."

It has often been observed that a recognisable feature of an Esquires café is a feeling of roominess, in that there may be a good number of tub chairs and sofas, but no feeling of being cramped.

"We do look for certain things in a site," confirms Kirton. "Spaciousness is one, and we deliberately look for bigger spaces, and greater options for seating within that.

'Great coffee no longer

The COFFEE HOUSE interview



"The question is, what is the community opportunity for sites like this? Personally, I prefer high street sites, but in older market towns the ones available do tend to be quite small. I did have an enquiry from someone who was considering a food-court in a disused Woolworth, and I thought that had merit, because of the size of those sites."

The requirement is deliberate.

"It is a deliberate strategy to have more seats catering to the clientele. One thing we recognised early on is that the takeaway business in the UK is not as developed as in America, and still is not, except in some business districts. So, if the business is not take-out, then it's sit-in.

"If it is sit-in, then it is probably 'treat time', to read a paper, sit, relax... so then we need legroom. Mothers with pushchairs are important for us, and they need pushchair-room.

"So, while some of our bigger shops are 2,000 sq.ft., our biggest seating number is 130, and our usual target is 70-100."

Choice of furniture in Esquires is not accidental. One of the big pub furnishing specialists told *Coffee House* recently: "I am not a lover of sofas - comfortable as they may be, if one person sits down on a sofa, nobody else will sit next to them. Strangely, on a bench seat, people are more likely to sit next to someone they don't know. So, on a 12-seat bench you may well seat a dozen people – on twelve sofa seats, you may have six people and the rest is wasted".

This, says Peter Kirton with a grin, gives clues to both understanding customer flow in a coffee shop, and in knowing how your customer service deals with it.

"If you watch a coffee shop fill up, you'll see where customers head first. They go to the tubs. Then they go to the sofas. The last places to fill up are the poseur bars and benches.

"Yes, there does seem to be a vogue for benches again, but I don't know if

that is more driven by retail designers than customer preference. And yes, the problem with sofas is that if one person sits down, others don't want to join them, so you have several seats wasted – but it's exactly the same story at tables.

"So, we now find that our franchisees, who tend to know their customers well, will often be the ones to ask: 'do you mind if this customer comes and sits next to you?'"

It has recently been said, and widely, that customer service is the next big battleground for the coffee house trade. The distinguishing factor between coffee houses used to be 'great coffee', but no longer.

"It's a very basic thing. We are now at the stage where the majority of operators are providing a decent coffee, and so consumers make their choice on proximity, or on service.

"The quality of your coffee should be a 'given' these days, so customer service is your difference.

"In Southport, we are in an old bank, and we still have the old vault to the rear - so we converted it into a kids' area. They can play, and watch videos, in a safe environment, and they love it... so do their mums. In an area which is now a whole parade of coffee shops, we added more service to the customer experience.

"Customer service is the most important one to get right. I always tell franchisees that if they have provided a reason for the customer to come back, they've done their job."

In spite of that observation, adds Kirton, he is proud of his coffee. In 2007, he made the notable move of being one of the first operators to go all-Fairtrade.

How about the baristas in franchised stores?

"We're trying to add more to this. We put our in-house competition winners in for the UK barista championship, and while they didn't progress past the regionals, we saw that some of our young baristas can make wonderful

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"It's a very basic thing. We are now at the stage where the majority of operators are providing a decent coffee, and so customer service is your difference." - Peter Kirton, Esquires

coffee, but don't have the other skills that 'competition baristas' develop.

"This didn't put our baristas off - it made them want to develop those other skills, so we are devising a new system of barista rewards, more things for them to try and achieve. We do see value in increasing their pride in what they do."

Many of the really big chains have said a lot about being 'part of their community', and Esquires extends that to its charity work. The chain supports Coffee Kids, and has a franchisee cycling across America in support of it this month.

"Hmmm... three thousand miles in thirty days, in temperatures going up to 40c. Well, I did warn him, but he still chose to do it in August! I applaud the willingness to go out and do things to make a difference in the world. He's already done John o'Groats to Lands End.

"We have funded part of the attempt, and we have worked to raise awareness of what he's doing, because Coffee Kids is not well-known among the consumers, so this is a challenge. We've had a fundraising launch in his shop, with musicians and barista demonstrations, we've had collection boxes in our other shops, and we've

spread the word."

Coffee Kids is a project which is known round the coffee trade, but is virtually unknown among consumers. Does this matter?

"Does the cause resonate with the customers? No, not as much as I would like - it's a hard message to get across. Still, the launch event was attended by his customers, who went out of their way to be there.

"The One Water message, for which we give 10p to the One Foundation from each bottle of water sold, to help provide clean water to villagers in Africa, does resonate demonstrably more with customers. We have already fully funded two water wells, at around £7,000 each, and we're on the way to our third. This is easier for customers to relate to than Coffee Kids."

And they do, he notes.

"Of all the countries I've lived in, I believe the British are most charitable and supportive of these things... I'm astounded at the generosity of the public."

The more local and recognisable 'community' actions of the coffee-house trade are the ones which are going to do most to impress the public. It is suspected that some cafes who

make this claim are paying lip-service to it, and certainly many councils have made no secret of their belief that the high streets are being taken over by coffee chains, to the detriment of their communities.

To what degree does Esquires genuinely attempt to be a part of its communities?

"Remember that the coffee shop started as a meeting place, and the role of the coffee shop today is still of a good, safe, clean meeting place for people to get together. It's safer than the pub - it's the place to feel comfortable. So we host church meetings, and we've hosted business meetings.

"This is a real contribution to the community, and you can experience it most in residential communities - we have franchisees who act as local Christmas card drop-off points!

"A lovely, but sad story is of the woman who thanked us for making the last two years of her mother's life bearable for the old lady. Coming to Esquires for her coffee and being greeted by the franchisee had been the highlight of her day.

"Making people feel valued is a part of giving something back to the community."

He is not alone in speaking up about this - typically, Peter Dore Smith of the highly-regarded Kaffeine coffee house in London, recently wrote that it is proven that a good cafe can be a very important part of the fabric of a local community, and it is for this reason that he is now often approached by shopping-area landlords who want a good

quality cafe for their shopping areas, but definitely not one of the big chains. Their argument, he says, is that a good independent improves the value of their retail estate.

"That is encouraging for the smaller players, and it's good to see that not every landlord wants to have only the 'safe bet' big boys," responded Peter Kirton.

"Coffee shops contribute a tremendous amount to the community. Yes, there is an element of 'taking from the community', and certainly there was a lot of bandwagon-jumping after some publicity a few years ago about the profitability of coffee shops.

"And yes, there is a limit to the number of coffee shops you can have. Many councils have their own bye-laws as to what percentage of premises they will allow for A3 use - and much as I hate this at times, I applaud it too. Too many coffee shops in one street is not 'diversity'.

"At the same time, I believe that councils must begin to realise that we offer much more to the high street than many retail outlets, and certainly more than charity shops, to which they give vast financial benefits.

"But - nobody on local councils controls the mix. Shopping centre managers do this very well, and they make sure that there are not too many phone shops in one centre. But councils do not... councils do not control their high-street mix well.

"If they did, they might realise that we do them far more good than harm!"

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Selling those great tastes...



A three-page report into the potential of this year's winners

The annual Great Taste awards are a gift for the promotionally-minded operator. But over the years, the deli trade has done far better from them than the cafe trade. It is time, say several suppliers, to put the winning logo in front of the customers and see what benefit comes...

The most remarkable performance by a beverage company in this year's awards was that of Newby Teas, which took twenty awards. The brand has a notable presence in the hospitality sector, largely where it is distributed to classy hotels by Café du Monde. It does, however, also have a growing business with independent coffee-houses and tea-shops, and is an enthusiastic advocate of the principle that the Great Taste badge wins business - the retailers and the delis have seen this, and use the logo to good effect... now is the time for cafe operators to benefit from it.

Newby's Ed Berry has been involved in Great Taste awards for some time - he won several for his Armadillo ice-cream a few years ago, and has also judged the cheese section of the awards ('tasting fifteen gorgonzolas one after the other is no joke', he can confirm.) This year, his reaction to the Newby score is carefully tempered with a reminder that the catering sector has yet to make the most of promoting these awards.



Ed Berry of Newby Teas

"This is our big moment, but we would still love the Great Taste awards to have greater recognition and acceptance.

"The whole Fine Food Guild message has been largely a retail story, rather than a foodservice one. The major route for award-winners is the deli and farm shop trade, where the logo can be seen on packs.

"So it follows that there are many foodservice brands that never get near a Great Taste award... but there are other catering-and-retail brands like us, who make it fairly easy for the cafe trade to use it.

"For this trade, the challenge of using the Great Taste logo is this - a coffee-house or tea-room's identity is effectively their own 'brand identity', unless they want to go down the Illy-route of putting the product first. But for most operators, 'my cup of tea' is 'my cup of tea', and that doesn't mean a branded cup of tea!

"So, where these awards are useful for the caterer is where they can be used as a third-party endorsement of the caterer's quality.

"In coffee, the nearest equivalent would be Cup of Excellence, but even that's only really known within the coffee industry. So, in both tea and coffee for the hospitality trade, the Great Taste awards fulfil the 'endorsement' job. This means that you use the awards logo to support the fact that your coffee-house or tea-room serves only the acknowledged best."

To highlight it, a promotion is easy to run.

"This is not difficult, and anyway, good promotions should be simple to run - as simple as 'this month, we're bringing you Great Taste teas...!'

"What I would do as a café or tea-room operator would be make sure my staff have the message, and use it: their line should be that 'this month, our specials are the teas which have

won the Oscars of the food world, selected by the best judges, and the ones we have picked for our customers are these... these are the best of the best!"

This way, says Ed Berry, the café operator can use the star to fullest effect, and for the venue's glory, without being subservient to the brand on the product.

Among Newby's twenty awards are some curiosities, which do have potential for the catering trade.

The Blue Peak is a fairly rare Himalayan, described as being 'pretty full-flavoured, fully-structured, without the kick of a conventional black tea'. There is also a rare Assam, which is a special version of one of the teas familiar in every café menu - but this is one of those special limited-edition teas which occasionally crop up, and it will in time run out.

Newby took a total of four stars for its jasmine teas, including one two-star award, and suggests that this is the opportunity to introduce good jasmine green tea to a café menu - there is an interest from the consumers.

A real curiosity is milk oolong, which illogically is drunk black.

There are various explanations of why a milk oolong has its distinctive taste - some say it is down to temperature shifts during harvest, and some legends refer to teas being steamed over milk. It does, however contain a milky 'scent', and is a good conversation-starter for any likely interested tea customer.

Get those great drinks up on the specials board!

Teapigs has again performed well - thirteen prizes, including five two-stars and one rare three-star.

However, we challenged the brand, only a couple of their winners would be considered conventional tea-menu items... so what would the coffee-house or tea-room proprietor do with the rest?

"We make no distinction between tea-rooms and coffee bars, because tea drinkers visit coffee bars!" replied Teapigs' Nick Kilby firmly, with the company's known position that good tea should be in all places.

"We recommend they serve the 3-star winning lemongrass. It's something completely different, but not that difficult to understand - lemon tea is often asked for, and citrus flavours are popular.

"Lemongrass is probably better known as an ingredient in Thai cooking, but also makes a wonderful and unexpectedly sweet, lime and citrus drink. It is drunk all over Asia as an aid to digestion, so we describe it as 'soothing sweetness'. It's great hot, but also makes a gorgeous iced tea, maybe with a dash of elderflower cordial added."

Sell it off the specials board, says Teapigs.

"We'd recommend it being served as a 'special of the month, the award-winning tea' and we'd encourage operators to offer small samples to their customers to try before they buy. This is easy, just make up one of those big pumping flasks and serve in small plastic cups. We do this all the time, and it works."

Teapigs will supply tent cards and shelf talkers, but recommends a full Great Taste blackboard promotion.

"Do a special over a period of time featuring all the winners.

"We'd love to see superb classic teas highlighted like this, and if they get really popular, add them to the main menu."

"Write them up on blackboards and menus - we see award winning cask ales promoted in pubs and winning wines in restaurants, so why not the same with tea and coffee?"

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Whittard scores with an unusual hot choc

Whittard of Chelsea (more accurately now 'of Oxfordshire') took ten stars, three of which were for hot chocolates, and one of those was probably the most unusual in the entire beverage section of the awards.

"The Rhubarb White Hot Chocolate is our newest flavour," marketing manager Jennifer Kelly told us. "It's a make-with-milk, and we developed it because we recognised there was a trend for English fruits such as rhubarb, gooseberry etc, and because we've had great success with pudding-themed hot choc flavours such as banoffee and tiramisu. When the flavour was in development, it worked extremely well with the white chocolate which has a really creamy, almost custardy quality which is obviously a great match for rhubarb.

"It's delicious, creamy, and would be perfect as an after-dinner dessert drink."



A 'gourmet instant' for Cafedirect

Cafedirect, the Fairtrade beverages company, scored well with five one-star prizes, of which the most unusual feature was the award of a star for an instant soluble coffee. This was the soluble version of its Macchu Picchu, now branded as a 'gourmet instant' coffee.

Cafedirect's everyday tea took a star - this is an all-African blend, from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, and it is packed as a foodservice product for caterers. The tea is said to show body and a distinctive rosy colour.

The brand picked up stars for its decaf roast and ground, and for its foodservice espresso beans. Perhaps most notably, there was a star for the San Cristobal drinking chocolate, also packed for foodservice. This is a Dominican Republic chocolate, with 40 per cent cocoa solids.

Black and Beyond from Percol

"The reason we have never ever entered our instant coffees in the Great Taste Awards is that we did not know it was possible," Percol told us. "Which is a pity as our instant range really is fabulous - we have quite often managed to convert staunch fresh coffee drinkers to liking our instant coffee even though they claim to 'not touch that instant stuff'."

The brand took four stars this year, the most notable of which is the success of its Black & Beyond espresso beans,



Percol's Black and Beyond - use for espresso or grind for cafetiere

which were entered as a retail pack but which are now to be packed as a food-service product in one-kilo bags.

The blend is described as 'dark and rich with notes of cocoa and sweet nutty aftertaste', and features a high-grown central American Arabica for acidity and flavour, a Brazilian for sweetness, and Ugandan robusta - "in our opinion, this is the best robusta for power and body," says Percol. The result, says the company, is 'all the richness of flavour that one would expect out of an espresso, but without the harsh, bitter aftertaste'. However, adds Percol, when ground for filter, the coffee also works extremely well in a cafetiere.

Percol's winning Fairtrade Colombia is described as 'unmistakably Colombian, tantalisingly rich aroma with a hint of nuts', and again is recommended for cafetiere use. So are their winning Guatemalan and Fairtrade Italiano.

Coffees with stories

Damian Blackburn of Bolling Coffee was the first we spoke to who acknowledged that he was particularly pleased to be recognised in the 2011 awards, because of the amount of competition and the strict nature of the judging.

Bolling took two two-star prizes and five one-star awards, and pointed out that the winning coffees have stories to be told.

"The Grumpy Mule Panama Diamond Mountain from Hacienda La Esmeralda in Boquete is always a favourite with customers, because it's both easy-drinking yet also has a unique style of its own - sweet, caramelly, with a citrusy finish. It's great for filter brewing, so we've had a lot of outlets serving it as a 'coffee of the week' by drip bar, so backing it up with the award and offering it for retail sale by the pack alongside would work well.



Grumpy Mule, from women producers

"We first visited the farm back in 2008 and have been buying the coffee ever since. The Peterson family are already renowned in the coffee industry for producing Esmeralda Special (which we also buy a micro-lot of each year) from their Geisha trees so the levels of quality in their harvesting and production are reflected in this award.

"The Grumpy Mule Organic Peru Café Femenino is from the women producers of the Cecanor co-operative. There are elements of the industry that would dismiss the quality of Fairtrade certified coffees, but we've always been believers that it's about finding the most interesting, best tasting examples.

"We were, I think, with the hugely

appreciated support of DR Wakefield, the first in the UK to launch a retail coffee that supported the Café Femenino programme, which aims to support women producers in coffee growing regions, with a Bolivian Café Femenino coffee. The aim there was to get behind an origin that produces amazing coffee but doesn't always get the recognition in the UK... it was so well received in its first year that we wanted to introduce a second Café Femenino coffee, and along came this Peru.

"With such a great story behind it, it would be a fine coffee to put forward in a

number of ways - it's nicely rounded and balanced and could be a good one for tasting events and evenings to tell a little bit about where the coffee came from while customers can sample it at the same time.

One of Bolling's one-stars was Grumpy Mule Tanzania Footprint, which has the curious distinction of having won a Great Taste award every year it has been entered.

"We first visited the Blackburn Estate in 2008 - the quality and attention to detail there is second to none and it's a stunning farm. The Footprint is 100-per-cent Peaberry so has a slightly more intense flavour than their other coffees, but every coffee we've tasted from there has been a cut above."



A new name to crop up was the Coffee Factory, which is a roastery in Seaton Junction, Dorset, and it took two one-star awards. The company's Danny Parfitt told us: "We have taken the time to find out what our customers are looking for in an everyday coffee blend. Not everyone is a connoisseur of coffee and the two blends are a good starting point for our customers.

"We have worked on the philosophy that as some people prefer red wine and other people prefer white wine, we have given the consumer that similar taste choice along with consistency and simplicity. To keep it nice and simple, we use brief descriptive words on our labels for the taste profile - the Black Label blend is chocolatey, sweet, balanced with a light acidity, and Red Label is a bright, fruity, citrus acidity with a light nuttiness.

"The customer can also choose to have their coffee whole bean, or freshly ground for espresso, plunger, stove-top or our favourite, the ceramic filter cone."

Scots supplier scores with Californian coffees

Glenfinlas of Scotland has won Great Taste stars regularly for the coffees it imports from the Alpen Sierra roastery in California. It continued the run this year with two awards.

The Alpenglow coffee is an all-day cafetiere coffee, described as "a lovely, multi-roast blend with a dark roast finish, sweet and spicy aroma with a deep, complex and rich flavour."

The Alpen Italian Roast is interesting in that it works equally as an espresso or a filter coffee, says the company.

"We were very excited here at Glenfinlas when the long-awaited delivery arrived.

"We had been chatting to Alpen founder Christian Waskiewicz over a few weeks about what coffees he had been roasting and what he could recommend to us.

"One of those recommendations was the Italian Roast.

"This medium dark roasted coffee is best when finely ground and used for espresso, but it still works really well

when brewed in a cafetiere which is how we first tried it.

"Italian Roast is a blend of three different varieties of beans - Central American, African and Indonesian beans, which give it that classic Southern Italian espresso style.

"One of the first things that you notice when you open the bag is the beautifully dark, rich and oily beans,

and that the aroma is wonderfully spicy with a slight hint of tangy lemon zest. In the cup, it's a very well balanced, full-bodied blend of coffees which gives it a more traditional character but a bright, assertive flavour and lots of acidity. You may also detect further spicy flavour elements as you keep tasting it.

"We were very impressed with it."

GLENFINLAS coffee

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Give your customers a real chai taste, says London Tea

A challenging remark was made to us by Dinuk Dissanayake of the London Tea Company, who took half a dozen stars. In London Tea's description of vanilla chai, he stresses "a chai that's actually made of real, organic spices blended with the finest Ceylon teas". Does this suggest that other chais are not?

"Yes, it does," he told us. "The chai teas commonly bought in supermarkets are made predominantly using flavours. This just doesn't give a real chai."

"The ingredients of a major competitor, copied from their box, says: 'black tea from several origins, ginger root, cinnamon bark, natural flavourings'. Some foodservice chais are even worse. But our Great Taste Award ingredients, which are all organic, are Ceylon black tea, ginger, vanilla, cinnamon, peppermint, cloves, cardamom, and natural ginger flavour."

London Tea distinctly specifies that its chai should be brewed with milk, and also suggests brown sugar. Is this to achieve a taste which comes anywhere near that of a roadside tea in India?

"Yes, it should be made with fresh milk. Some instant versions have a powdered milk or milk substitute as part of the mix, so you only have to add water – but this is obviously not the same as you get in India."

"I think demarera sugar gives a

more deeper, richer taste than white sugar."

For coffee-bar use, the method is to use the steam arm of the espresso machine and heat the milk, and then brew the tea bag for at least five minutes to let the flavours infuse.



London Tea also won stars for its peppermint and chamomile infusions. Many suppliers say that the key to these teas is sourcing a good peppermint, and sourcing a good chamomile.

"I'm very proud of both of these. London Tea's aim isn't specialist single estates, or rare teas, but great 'mainstreams', the best everyday teas. Yes, the quality does depend on sourcing from the best crops."

"The market for chamomile in food-service isn't that great, which is a shame, because a good chamomile is lovely."

"I think the reason is mainly because chamomile is consumed in the evening to unwind at home, so in a catering environment it's not as relevant."

"But in retail, it is a big seller."

When you have an award - promote it like hell!

Allan Pirret of Daily Grind took one of the few three-star awards in tea this year, and says that his Novus teas benefitted from the experience of a previous award, and that promoting the Great Taste logo works.

"The three-star Novus Citrus Chamomile is a herbal infusion almost like a glass of white wine! It has gentle citrus notes which balances the chamomile's natural bitterness beautifully, and is very easy to drink, even if you are not a chamomile fan. We have recently changed the blend after comments received in the 2010 judging - the changes have been a triumph!"

Novus took two stars for its Persian Pomegranate ("a sweet, juicy infusion, with real impact and flavour") and one star for organic jasmine, naturally scented with jasmine petals, which Allan Pirret says "means a clean crisp flavour".

Use the awards logo, he stresses.

"We have always stressed to customers to use the awards in their menus and marketing activity. We have hotel clients which are perfect examples of driving business this way, and even the five-star Royal Horseguards have taken this approach to great effect – their recent afternoon tea launch has been very successful, because customers are reassured that they are selecting a great-tasting product."

"The logo splattered beside tea descriptions works well when you see several down the menu. Even in coffee bars, menu boards behind the bar can be decorated with GTA award stickers - promote real tea to complement real coffee!"

"When you have a story to tell do not 'whisper it down the well!' - market it like hell!"

Winners with selling stories to use

What is again notable is the number of independent small tea companies who keep cropping up, many with stories behind their work.

Melissa Choi, who founded Choi Time to the memory of her grandmother, who taught her about the skincare properties of tea, won a gold for her Yellow Treasure. This is a rich tea, with the green oolong providing a depth of flavour balanced with the slight sweetness of osmanthus flowers.



A very rare success - a beverage makes it into the Great Taste supreme champ shortlist

Kate Gover named her Lahloo tea company after the tea clipper her great-great-grandfather sailed on. She took a two-star for her Earl Grey and one star for her green mulberry. Her version of Earl Grey matches Darjeeling tea with Sicilian bergamot; the mulberry herbal infusion is made with leaves from Thailand, and described as 'fruity, caffeine-free and packed with antioxidants'.

A new move for Lahloo is the proposed opening of a café and shop in Bristol later this year.

Another variation on Earl Grey won an award for Quinteessential – this is Earl Blue, a blend of Chinese and Indian leaves, with oil of bergamot and a dash of blue cornflowers. The company's Bernadine Tay tells us that she creates custom blends for the hospitality trade as well.

Her other winners were Garden of Eden (fine green and black afternoon tea blended with fruits, blossoms, and the curious ingredient of 'frosted butterflylies', in a peach aroma), Jewel of Africa (herbs and citrus with rooibos, red currants, sandalwood, peony blossoms and rose petals) and Ying and Yang, 'opposing elements' of strawberries and white peppercorns against the tang of rooibos.

At Suki Tea of Belfast, Oscar Woolley told us that his rooibos citrus green with lemongrass won for what appears

to be the second time in four years - as indeed did his red berry infusion. The rooibos contains even higher levels of antioxidants.

Clipper took nine awards – two-star prizes for everyday loose leaf tea, organic fennel infusion, organic red-bush and organic chamomile, and one-stars for everyday tea-bags, Earl Grey tea-bags, an infusion of red fruits with aronia, a peppermint infusion, and a Fairtrade drinking chocolate.

One very rare accolade was given to Pukka Herbs, the supplier of organic infusions – its three fennel organic herbal tea has made it into the list of nominees for the Great Taste Supreme Champion title. We don't think a hot beverage has got that far before.

"The three-fennel, which is organic sweet fennel, wild fennel and fennel leaf tea to soothe and calm, is fennel tea as it should be – deliciously sweet, aromatic and soothing." Pukka's Liam Tullberg told us. "We have created a unique blend to harness the incredible potential – three varieties give an abundance of flavour that also helps calm and support your digestion."

Pukka's other winners were Night Time, which is oat flower, lavender, limeflower and valerian tea, to give a peaceful sleep; Three Ginger, described as rich, spicy and stimulating; Cleanse, a nettle, fennel and peppermint to purify the skin, and Detox.

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When Gaggia, one of the pioneering names of espresso coffee, closed its British base in the summer of 2009, it was a shock to the trade.

No sooner had the *Times* made the unusual move of reporting that Gaggia was 'teetering on the brink of administration', than the *Halifax Courier* reported that the brand's headquarters in the town was 'suddenly shut down', with 30 staff reportedly out of work.

The ultimate ownership of the Gaggia brand name had changed some days previously, with the manufacturer, Saeco, being acquired by the Dutch electrical giant Philips.

According to one story, the British distributor was simply no longer required.

And so, seventy years after Achille Gaggia had applied for a patent which became a notable development in the espresso machine, there came a spell of confusion, conflicting statements and rumours were flung around, and many Gaggia users wondered if they would be able to get service and spares for their machines.

Then the decisive move came from Ireland, where David Lawlor's Watermark company had been the local Gaggia distributor for some time. Lawlor told the trade that through his direct contact with Italy, he had all necessary spares, and that in 'a big adventure', he proposed to fill the gap by opening an English service base for the Gaggia brand.

He has now done so – Watermark Coffee Technology has opened the Gaggia Quality Team headquarters and training centre in Chesham.

Apart from being the base for a national servicing organisation, acknowledges David Lawlor, the site serves another important purpose – effectively, to tell the catering trade that Gaggia is alive and well.

He starts from a reasonable base, having achieved some credit for his work during the crisis period. It now turns out, he has told *Coffee House*, that he knew the crisis was coming.

"Even now, I don't have all the facts, and I'd rather not speculate on them, but Gaggia from Italy had contacted us in 2008. We already had a close relationship with them, and so they said to us: 'there's a problem coming down the line in the UK, we don't know how it will end up, but would it be of interest to you to distribute our commercial range in the UK?'"

"I was taken by surprise, but three months later, when they called me over to Italy, I realised that this idea had legs.

"It was none of my business to ask about Gaggia UK. I knew them - the MD, Raj Beadle, is a very nice man, and we had a good relationship, in that we managed the Irish end of one of his contracts" (and indeed, he is now back as a distributor of the brand, under Watermark).

"As for the 'why' of it, I've heard a lot of the speculation, and much of the

Gaggia - back from the brink



"Any service company should be very acutely aware that all their customers are likely to have a very good opinion of how they are performing..."

- David Lawlor

reasoning behind it was not good."

The UK press had reported the staff in Halifax as saying: 'we knew the company was in trouble'. This, remarks David Lawlor, is a key business issue – all business managers should realise that staff and customers alike may know more than you think.

"Any service company should be very acutely aware that all their customers are likely to have a very good opinion of how a supplier is performing... if maybe a call isn't returned, or suddenly it's difficult to get an engineer, customers will hear alarm bells. It is always worth remembering that your customers can read the clues."

Although there was a lot of apparent worry over the availability of spares, and although Watermark may appear

by hard-fought experience over time, and it means that we do not have to rush stuff over from Italy in a panic.

"But we had so many enquiries that I even took pictures of all the parts we held and put them up on our website, just to prove our resources to the trade. That took me two days, and guess what... nothing happened, there was no massive influx of orders for parts. We had managed to avoid all the panic, if not the hot air!"

The new Chesham base is a vital one for the Gaggia image.

"We didn't have a champagne-popping party because that's not our style... but we're open now, and this is very important.

"Some of our competitors will have been delighted to tell customers that a

Watermark of Ireland has opened its new UK service centre, which marks the formal re-appearance of the Gaggia brand

to have steamed in like the seventh cavalry, David Lawlor now insists that behind the scenes, everything was in hand.

"We ourselves had had no problems with any spare parts, which we import direct from Italy. So, when it all went public, and the Italians asked me to engage with the distributors in the UK, we had pretty much already been in touch with every independent engineer servicing commercial machines.

"About fifty times we had conversations which went 'do you really hold Gaggia parts - yes we do', and we made it clear to the trade that we could get original Gaggia parts, with transparent pricing and mark-up, in a couple of days, without any drama.

"We already knew that our spare parts system works. We have a very slick scheme with a strict stock discipline, tightly run to rigorous controls, on pain of death! We have built this up

Dublin company like us is 'too remote' to give them service, and so it is very important to now have a place where we can invite customers to come along and see things for themselves.

"The truth is that people buy from people, and they value the support of suppliers they know and trust... they value that far more than saving a few quid by buying over the internet.

"So it is essential for us to have the new service centre where people can see, touch and feel the machines, see the training facilities, and be reassured that there is a real organisation supporting them.

"What next is... to tell people we're still here."

That is a telling remark. It is certainly true that while several of the famous Italian machine names have spent the last couple of years talking loudly about their vast advances in espresso technology, Gaggia was silent during

its troubles, and fell behind the pack.

Is Gaggia actually good enough to stand beside the ones who have been doing all that shouting?

"The actual Gaggia equipment is really very good," returns Lawlor smartly, "and in the Irish market three years ago, you would have heard me going on and on and on about the very technology that every other brand has been talking about in the UK! The Gaggia Deco is the top of the range, and it is also my biggest seller, because of the technical functionality that makes an identifiable difference in the coffee.

"You can go down certain streets in Dublin and see lots of these machines working, and the reason people buy them is that they are well-enough made to keep running. We have one customer who is replacing hers after eighteen years, and that's not an isolated case... we know a twenty-year-old one still working well.

"But of course, the events of 2008-2009 led to Gaggia being left behind when all the other espresso machine brands were banging on about temperature control and everything else - if you're not talking, you don't get heard.

"Do we now have to start talking to get interest back in Gaggia? Exactly right!"

Did the troubles do any long-term harm to the reputation of Gaggia?

"This comes back to the interesting question of taking the trouble to know how people see your company.

"Certainly, some people did keep saying 'the brand is damaged', but those who were saying it had a vested interest in doing so, and I really have come to hear that less and less.

"At Caffe Culture, somebody did come up to me and say: 'that company over there says Gaggia has gone out of business'. I thought: 'oh, thanks very much - we did a lot to help that company out with the really difficult stuff when the problems had happened'.

"And I expect those people will go on saying 'Gaggia's in trouble' for another fifteen years. The reality is that it will not do them any good. It actually reflects very poorly on a company when a customer finds out that something they've been told is not true.

"So, we have had several cases of customers being absolutely appalled at things they've been told by our competitors, and the truth of it is this - customers really do not like being misled by someone who is trying to sell them something."

And, says Lawlor, the brand name still holds its recognition. "There was a classic moment in the closing minutes of the Caffe Culture show this year. A lady came along and said: 'thank heaven I've found you, where have you been, I've been looking for you for ages!' And she bought a two-group machine there and then.

"And you know, I think that rather sums up the whole Gaggia situation."

At one time the idea of putting a logo on a takeaway cup was considered classy. Today that is not the case, because a logo does not 'say' anything – with the exception of Costa, whose single-word cup is intended to tell people 500 yards away that there is a branch somewhere near, a logo is now generally considered to be insufficient use of a printed cup.

Most cup makers are agreed that there are now better ideas, and one concept which has yet to be taken up widely is the variable cup design – that is, a delivery of cups in which every cup in a sequence is different.

It is not entirely new. For many years the Canadian chain Tim Hortons has based its major promotion, 'Roll up the Rim', on a variable message printed just under the rollover top of the cup. In many cases, the message says 'sorry, try again', but every so often the message gives a free doughnut, or, in rare cases, a prize up to a car.

International Paper has taken up a similar idea with its Wild Card cup, which has a design theme of tough poker-playing gamblers. The cup design shows a hand of poker, and the company's sales literature says that 'variable print allows for hundreds of hand combinations'.

"The five-card configuration that each caricature has varies such that the chances of two cups being exactly the same is slim," says marketing director Mike Gardner. "This shows what is possible on the wall of cups – well, it shows what we at IP can do!"

In addition, the print on the base of the cup also changes. In poker terms, you could think of this as the equivalent of drawing an extra card, and the beverage operator has the opportunity to give a prize to a customer who returns a cup with a winning 'hand'.

"This is relatively simple, but as base stock is traditionally unprinted, it does involve an additional process," says Mike Gardner. "However, the print can be a lower-quality one-colour, and so it works well for long runs. We have not yet produced any variations on the poker theme, but we're open to ideas."

There are, he suggests, a number of ways to use the 'variable message' printing process.

The creative cup



International Paper's Wild Card cups

Just having your logo on a takeaway cup really isn't enough any more. Today, that cup has to really work for you

"We have done a lot of these, but mainly in the US. You can use '2D', which are printed tags which are read with a 'smart phone', and direct a consumer to an internet site, either for information or a game option.

"We can print random codes on the side of a cup, and this is typically used in conjunction with an internet site – the user logs in their code and it's the internet program which tells them if they have won something.

"There are peel-off labels, where the consumer can win an immediate prize, or collect the peels to complete a game board or loyalty card.

"There is also a standard printing option where the design includes an SMS text response number. The consumer texts the number and can win a prize, and it also makes a great method for building a database to use with reverse-messaging."

Many of the possibilities are no longer technically difficult, says Tony Waters, managing director of Solo Cup, which was an early pioneer of the idea of smaller-run quantities for the average coffee house. The key now, he has long preached, is to develop more creative ideas for the printed cup.

"At one time we thought of the printed cup as 'your brand in their hand'. All brands have to start somewhere, and so we chose to be in on the ground floor for those small companies who are starting their brands. In difficult trading times, establishing your brand and the value of it is important.

"Now, of course, we know that a cup sits, almost iconically, on desk tables... this means that while a certain number of people will buy it, far more will actually read any message on it.

"There is plenty of opportunity, and you can see the further potential, even

in simple uses. One of the originators was Starbucks, who began the 'holiday' cups – think of their Christmas design. They were groundbreakers in 'seasonal' designs and messages, and others now follow... but most still don't use the medium enough.

"It is perfectly possible to have a sequence of different designs. This is because of the way the artwork works



This is the possibly-unique inside-print job from The Paper Cup Company

on the printing plate, which makes it not at all difficult to have four or five designs repeated in sequence through your stock, so that effectively, consecutive customers receive a different design. This could be used much more effectively."

However, not all operators see it.

"The concept of cup printing has been taken up enthusiastically in patches and pockets," agrees Tony Waters. "Some people have 'got it', and have used it extensively, while others have not seen it at all.

"This is largely down to the attitude of the individual operator – some people just think in a different entrepreneurial way. Many of those who do 'get it', see the whole thing as a different kind of expense – where some companies see a branded cup as a cost to a café, the others see it as an 'advertising spend'.

So, depending on your entrepreneurial thinking, you can choose to see it as 'a more expensive cup' or 'a less expensive advertising message!'"

The telling point of this argument, agrees Joe Frankel of Vegware, is the fairly recent general realisation of the long attention-span of the paper cup. Whether it remains in their hand or on a tabletop or desktop, consumers look at a coffee cup, with varying degrees of intensity, for fifteen minutes.

In a typical job, said Vegware, they were hired by the marketing department of the Tate Movie Project, not a catering department, to create a message to reach children about creating a collaborative film project. The theory was that consumers walk around with their branded cups in their hand, so any coffee drinker becomes a walking advert.

Vegware is another company to work on the lower-quantity principle – their minimum order quantity is now one thousand, with a delivery time of three weeks. The Vegware cup, made of an outer layer of high-recycled-content paper and an inner layer of sustainably-sourced paper board, bonded with a compostable resin and lined with GM-free cornstarch, is printed with water-based or vegetable inks, and has third-party certification confirming that it can be composted together with food waste. The cup won 'best new product' in the Climate Week awards.

(A different biodegradable option comes from Peros, with the 'Sleeve for Life', which fits cups from 12oz-24oz. It is made from 'up-cycled' coffee sacks, gives insulation through a double layer of jute, can be kept and re-used several times, and can be overprinted. It is manufactured by Remploy, the 'social employment' organisation.)

Imaginative variations are positively welcomed by imaginative suppliers, says Mark Woodward of the Paper Cup Company. He has already created something which might possibly be unique, but is certainly unusual – he has printed inside a paper cup. This

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Branding is now possible on the KeepCup, the re-usable cup promoted as being 'barista-friendly'.

The Boston Tea Party café chain has launched an idea to support the Coffee Kids charity – it's a branded KeepCup to be filled with a first coffee, and sold at £6.95. All profit will go to the charity, together with an additional donation from the café chain.

was a job for a hospital which needed liquid dosing levels shown inside the cup, and Mark Woodward thinks the achievement was unique because the hospital said that it had asked every other cup company to do it, without success. He suspects that at present, the great problem is that you can only print either outside or inside, not on both surfaces – but he is looking at it.

There are very practical ways of using cup design even for the smaller operator, he says. One idea which was always thought to be impractical for the independent coffee-house has now been seen to work if approached in a different way.

"The concept of selling advertising on cups is one that many salesmen have been enthusiastic about, but it becomes very difficult to actually bring it to market. It falls down at the stage of going out and selling the advertising, because that job is well beyond most cafe operators' skills, time and effort... realistically, the café in Basingstoke is not going to go down the road and sell ad-cup advertising to the AA!

"The key here is to go into partnership with people you already know, or who you already work with. We have now had a coffee-shop selling half the space on its takeaway cup to a local estate agency. There was also a water company who sold advertising space on cups to a taxi operator. So it can be done, and I'd love to hear of more examples of people who have succeeded with it.

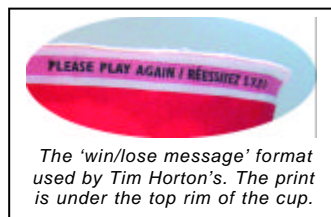
"We absolutely agree that the cup is the place to put an active promotional



Examples of using a cup to send a message - Vegware's museum cup (left) promotes forthcoming exhibitions. The Paper Cup Company's ad-cup co-operative project between a cafe and an estate agency is top left, and in a Printed Cups UK example, an Indonesian restaurant uses full all-round print.

message. I've spent a lot of time advising people that to put your name on is 'brand awareness', but to put a message on saying 'buy two coffees, get a free cake', means that you might double the coffee sale for someone who decides they'll take one back to the office for someone else.

"Our in-house designers are always desperate for a challenge like this – they have the blank canvas, and what they want is for a coffee-house owner to say 'can you do...?'"



The 'win/lose message' format used by Tim Horton's. The print is under the top rim of the cup.

He too believes that there is scope for the café operator in small-run cup-based promotions. Speed now comes more into this, he notes.

"We had always positioned ourselves for low print runs, to save small coffee-shops having to order 150,000. But we see that we will always have people leaving things until a fortnight before a special event, so now we'll do a thousand, and we'll even do them in a week if they're in trouble. The process is trade-marked to us, and having our own designers in the office here makes everything easier and quicker."

Unusually, Mark Woodward is even looking to consult the trade on the matter of practical cup construction.

"I'm very interested in operators' thoughts on the ideal size for a paper cup. This question comes from discus-

sions with customers who put one shot in their 8oz drink, and two shots in both their 12oz and 16oz, therefore creating three different flavour drinks!

"We could manufacture a different size, if there is sufficient demand for it."

Joe Fogel of Printed Cups UK says that his new small-batch service now offers printing throughout the outer surface of the cup.

"We used to overprint on a pre-made cup which gave the customer the option of ordering as little as 1,000 cups. We then created a new service where we can produce 1000 cups, full coverage, full-colour in 7 days - litho-printed flat, then the machine forms the cup. This is an industry 'first' as most manufacturers have a minimum run of 50,000, and it is also far more cost effective than overprinting on a pre-made cup."

The question is – are the trade customers responding imaginatively?

"The service has gone down very well. It enables smaller independent coffee shops to have custom printed cups without the need for funds and storage to sit on 25,000 of them. It has also been popular with promotional agencies who now use them for small campaigns and trade shows."

As people have begun to speak of 'variable content', is this practical in short runs?

"It is certainly possible - based on 8oz double wall cups we can make a single plate with four separate designs, on a small production run, but it does increase the cost slightly."





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The Rainforest Alliance has confirmed that it will be running its first 'awareness week' in support of its certified coffee and tea in September, but the trade has expressed surprise that there will be no central promotional back-up or support material for retailers or caterers for the cafe trade to use.

For retailers and coffee-houses looking to benefit from the Week, the main publicity material will be that which they create themselves, or which Rainforest-allied suppliers will create for their trade customers... however, all the suppliers we have spoken to so far say they have not been told of the event.

The Week is set for 19-23 September, and when asked by this magazine whether the coffee trade would have enough time to prepare for the event, the Alliance replied: "This is the first year we have done this, and so are trying to capture as much learning as possible from our experience. This is clearly one such learning point.

"For 2012, or 25th anniversary, we are aiming to make the week a lot bigger and will be looking at the timeline very carefully."

There is no back-up material for the first event, except for a 'toolkit', of suggestions, which are essentially fairly basic suggestions for local PR work. The Alliance itself is hoping that the event will be publicised through social networking, and its 'toolkit' includes suggestions of messages which it hopes supporters will 'tweet' during the week.

"As the vast majority of our funding

Concern over preparations for Rainforest Week



Spot the frog? It may be difficult in Rainforest Week

going to developing the capacity of farmers in the field, in general we have very few funds to spend on marketing in the developed countries," said a spokesman. "The same is true for what we are able to offer retailers and coffee shops. The 'tool-kit' we have produced is full of useful things that people can do in terms of their own social media outreach and we will be looking to add it to ours."

Asked if any Rainforest Alliance activity would be specifically designed to drive people into cafes asking for Rainforest coffee, the spokesman replied:

"We hope so. We're asking people to seek our products with the Frog (the Alliance's logo character). We are asking them to take photos of where they have seen the Frog, and of pictures of themselves buying/drinking coffee.

"This will be posted to our Facebook page to spread the word. So, if a coffee-house is pushing their uses for Rainforest Alliance coffee then the chances are people will respond to it."

A straw poll around the trade has so far produced little awareness of the event among suppliers; the only con-

structive response so far has been from Drury, who have reported that they are re-working their Rainforest blend in September, but that the timing is a coincidence. Importers and roasters alike have told us that they have not heard of the event – one significant importer said: 'if they want my support, they need to tell me about it'. Another of the most significant bean importers said: "Yes, we work with Rainforest coffee... no, they haven't told us about it."

Meanwhile, rooibos, the south African 'red bush' which is brewed as a kind of tea, has become certified by the Rainforest Alliance. A group of South African farms producing for Rooibos Ltd, who exhibited at Caffe Culture this year, are the first to achieve the seal for the product.

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Coffee shops are still more popular than pubs for out-of-home eating and drinking, according to the new *Taste of the Nation* report from Deloitte. Their survey showed a slight increase in the number of occasions consumers plan to eat or drink out in the near future, and that coffee and sandwich shops now account for one in three 'eating and drinking occasions'.

Some Starbucks stores in New York have begun covering their power points, to force 'camping' laptop-using customers to work on their batteries, rather than the company's power supply.

Police in Hertfordshire have warned of a new trend of thieves targeting coffee-house customers – cafes are apparently ideal venues for a target victim to be distracted.

Krispy Kreme is launching three new donut-and-coffee bars at Westfield Stratford City, Bath and Meadowhall, Sheffield. The chain is to double its UK stores by 2016. This magazine has learned that when the business recently opened in Leeds, first week performance was three times the predicted level.

Voting is now open for the coffee house section of the London Lifestyle awards, although the classification seems to include waffle shops and cake shops. The shortlist is: Haberdashery, Wafflemeister, Sacred, Patisserie Valerie, Napket, Konditor & Cook, Jack's Tea & Coffee House, Benugo, and last year's winner, Bar Italia.



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