

SIN & R

Sacramento News & Review

What's brewing in
Sacramento's
coffee
scene?

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CAPITAL

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COFFEE
CAPITAL

Sacramento's award-winning coffee scene is just as mom-and-pop as it is nationally recognized

Bold chocolate and nutty aromas waft through the small cafe as a large coffee grinder whirs steadily, followed by the familiar hiss from a steam wand as it heats a small pitcher of milk. Some customers type quietly behind glowing laptops, while others sit comfortably at the coffee bar chatting up staff who weigh freshly roasted beans before pouring them into small bags.

It's a typical morning at Coffee Works, Sacramento's oldest specialty roaster that has been serving its house-made blends to East Sacramento and beyond since 1982. Back in those days, recalls owner John Shahabian, there were no specialty coffee houses and Starbucks had yet to stake its claim in the state capital.

Almost 40 years later, Sacramento's coffee scene has flourished. Temple Coffee Roasters, Old Soul Co. and Chocolate Fish Coffee Roasters compete nationally at the annual Golden Bean awards, the world's largest coffee roasters competition. Each also consistently ranks in the 90s on a 100-point scale created by *Coffee Review* to rate coffee similar to wine.

Yet as much as Sacramento's specialty coffee community wins national acclaim, it's also home to small, cozy cafes that offer a warm place to relax, talk and enjoy a hot beverage. But it's both parts that keep Sacramento's culture as a coffee capital brewing.

Right: Temple Coffee's head roaster, Camilla Yuan, is the expert behind some of the highly rated coffee varieties such as its Ethiopia Sidamo Gora Kone, which scored an impressive 94 points with *Coffee Review*.

According to the National Coffee Association,
64%
 of Americans drink a cup of coffee every day.

'CROP-TO-CUP'

A number of independent coffee roasters started popping up in Midtown and downtown in the early 2000s. Temple Coffee owner Sean Kohmescher opened his first location in November 2005 in the old Levinson's book store building on 10th Street. Inspired by his travels to Indonesia, Kohmescher wanted to open a communal space modeled after the temples he visited, a place where people could gather and enjoy delicious cups of coffee.

Now, Kohmescher has six locations, with a seventh opening in a few months. He also looks forward to the completion of a 44,000 square-foot warehouse in Depot Park where he'll have more space for training baristas and also educating the public.

"In today's day and age, I think people want fresh, new beverages. I think the market is becoming much more signature as people are becoming more playful with recipes," he says. "There are a lot more creative things happening, which is exciting."

Although the world of specialty coffee can be intimidating, similar to learning the ins and outs of fine wines, Kohmescher says there are varieties for every taste.

"A Guatemala would be a great coffee to start somebody off with. All of the flavor characteristics are very approachable. There's going to be a lot of citrus and melon and it's going to be light and sweet," he says. "Some people may also like Brazil because it's going to be a little deeper and chocolaty and not have much high notes, so they may enjoy that better."

One year after Temple opened, Old Soul Co. began roasting coffee



in its L Street alley location. Co-owner Jason Griest says at first he and co-owner Tim Jordan started out as a wholesale roaster and baker. But drawn by the aroma of fresh-baked pastries and roasted coffee beans, many passersby wanted coffee and sweets on the spot. In 2007, Old Soul opened as a retail space and began serving its award-winning coffees to the public with locations on the grid and in Oak Park.

Griest says Sacramento's coffee scene is very interwoven. He remembers Kohmescher from when they both worked at Naked Lounge (another independent coffee roaster) before the two started their own ventures. Former roasters at Old Soul have opened their own coffee houses

and roasteries, including Ryan Harden of Camellia Coffee Roasters and Lucky Rodrigues of Insight Coffee Roasters and later Identity Coffees.

"One of the cool things about Sacramento is that everyone is supportive of each other and friends, so when Lucky opened Insight and Identity and Ryan opened Camellia, for us, it was really cool to see other people grow," he says. "Sacramento is just going to continue to gain a better reputation with more young professionals opening up their own stores in the next five years. It's not just farm-to-fork anymore, it's crop-to-cup."

A GROWING CULTURE

When people think of coffee destinations they mostly think of San Francisco, Seattle or Portland. But a 15-minute walk through Midtown or a leisurely bike ride through the grid's outlying neighborhoods will land anyone at or near a specialty coffee shop or cafe. Sprudge, a coffee news and culture blog based in Portland, rated Sacramento as one of five "underrated coffee cities" in America.

But there's still room for growth.

Pachamama Coffee—an independent cooperative owned by coffee farmers and

governed by a board of directors representing countries such as Ethiopia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru and Mexico—opened its roastery at 20th and J streets in 2012. Thaleon Tremain, CEO of Pachamama, says he's witnessed the Midtown area's growth as well as the demand for premium coffee and welcoming spaces.

"We've got great coffee people, great coffee

roasters, great

cafes," he says.

"Customers support not just the high quality aspect of coffee, but also that it's a local business. And I think that creates a coffee community and I think when people come here to Sacramento, they recognize that, too."

As the Sacramento

coffee scene continues to expand, local roasters are incorporating new techniques and technology.



PHOTO BY MARY HOYNAK



Andres Polo is big on coffee tech and pulling espresso shots at Old Soul Co.'s L Street alley location.

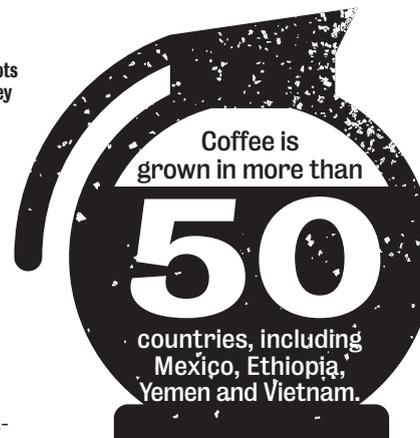
For instance, software companies such as Cropster have developed programs that help recreate award-winning varieties by setting roasting schedules and tracking different variables to achieve consistent batches of coffee.

"I definitely believe that's going to be a big movement going forward," says Andres Polo, a barista at Old Soul who keeps an eye on what's up and coming in the industry. "It just goes to show that technology does play a role in the coffee scene here in Sacramento and on a multinational level too. Technology is now more precise to get exactly what you want in the cup."

SACRAMENTO HAS SOUL

Inside an 80-year-old building near historic McKinley Park, sisters Sabrina and Makeda Berhane opened Tiferet, a cozy little coffee shop, in August 2014. As joggers rounded laps near the rose garden on a recent Monday morning, Sabrina was chatting with her customers. She says the area needed a small, no-frills cafe that

PHOTO BY REID TOWLER



catered to families and had a friendly touch.

"I think that coffee has come to a pinnacle where there's almost a little pretentiousness to it, but really it's just coffee," she says. "It's a warm beverage that you're going to drink to wake up or spend some quality time with someone. It's something to be enjoyed."

Sabrina says she enjoys sitting at other coffee shops in town to experience the various ways other local business owners are creating communal spaces.

On the other side of East Sac, Shahabian sits outside his neighborhood coffee house near a hand-painted sign that reads "Coffee Works 1982." He says coffee is one of life's luxuries that is accessible to just about everyone.

"Community and culture I think is really what this is about. I told one of my friends that it's like a place where we can repair our souls," he says. "People come here with problems, and we talk to them and help them get through. We have a certain kind of profile of customers, and they're usually people who aren't paying attention to whether or not you have fancy tile on the floor, whether you have a printed cup or whether it looks upscale. We're just very real. We're a very real place." □



BY RACHEL MAYFIELD  rachelm@newsreview.com

BREW the perfect cup

An alternative guide to a somewhat complex beverage ritual

If you've ever tried brewing your own coffee, you've probably noticed: There's a heck of a lot of options out there. Espresso? More like, "espress-I don't-know!" Dark roast? Sure, that sounds like it would taste good. Wait, does the water go in here? Whoops, no it does not.

Between all the different ingredients, methods and philosophies, it's hard to navigate elite coffee culture and also know that what you're brewing is "the good stuff." It might even get to the point where you're too intimidated to even try. What if your guests turn up their noses? What if your partner leaves you for a highly skilled barista? What if your roast is really, truly disgusting?

Luckily, there's a foolproof method to ensure that every cup of coffee you pour is astoundingly delicious. All you need are a few essential ingredients, a little patience and a pure heart.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 1 bag of whole bean coffee with tasteful packaging
- Water

STEP 1: Pour coffee beans down the drain. Pour the water as well to make sure no beans get lodged in the pipe.

STEP 2: Tell any guests expecting coffee that you're out, but if they assist you in a series of tasks, soon they will be drinking

an incredibly rich and fulfilling beverage.

STEP 3: With the help of your guests, draw a circle on the ground, large enough to fit a human in the fetal position.

STEP 4: Place one guest at the center of the ring. Those remaining should sit around the circle at an equal distance from each other. Then say

in unison, "Coffee please!"

STEP 5: Assuming the ritual works, the guest should have transmuted into a piping hot, perfectly brewed cup of coffee. If you want more cups, repeat this ritual to satisfy any remaining guests.

STEP 6: Enjoy! □