

Coffee culture grows in South Africa

Sales of coffee, both locally and overseas, are continuing on an upward trend. World coffee exports amounted to 9.21 million bags in November 2012, compared with 7.88 million in November 2011 and in South Africa, consumers are increasingly prepared to try out new and more sophisticated options.



Director at The Daily Buzz,
Chris Brown

Chris Brown, director at The Daily Buzz, a local chain of upmarket workplace coffee bars, comments, "We are seeing a change in the local coffee culture - people are becoming more discerning and aware when it comes to drinking coffee. More coffee drinkers have bean grinders at home and not only coffee-making machines, which illustrates the growing shift away from drinking instant coffee in South Africa. As a country, we are in many respects still an 'English colony' of tea drinkers and the widespread consumption of premium coffee is still new. I'd say that we're still a few years behind the top coffee areas in the US, when it comes to our coffee trends and what we're offering and open to trying."

In South Africa in 2013, Brown believes we will see a continuing trend towards options that are perceived as being healthier and a rise of a number of different brewing methods. "Items such as frozen yoghurt, which are perceived to be healthier 'treat' options, will become available on more menus. As far as coffee drinks go, some of the newer, more theatrical brewing methods, which bring out the best flavours in well-roasted coffee, will begin to gain popularity. Locally, espresso-based coffees - which refers to a method of brewing where pressurised hot water is forced through finely ground coffee - have dominated the menu boards of South African speciality coffee shops. However, I think that in 2013, we will see more and more alternative brewing methods being introduced.

"For example, manual coffee-making methods are becoming an increasingly popular option for home enthusiasts and coffee shop baristas alike. You will drink it black because it tastes so good. I believe we will also see more grinding of the beans on demand, as well as a steady increase in the demand for Fair Trade and organic coffee, even though it will still take up only a fraction of the market. Finally, I think we will continue to see some of the better independent coffee shops setting up their own in-house coffee roasters. A combination of the theatrics, smell and guaranteed freshness should help draw in more customers."

Best coffee cities, Cape Town could join them

Asked on his 'top five' coffee capitals, he replies that he wouldn't like to give such a list, as he would still like to explore the coffee globe more widely, but adds, "Of the places I have been to, there are two that stand out above the rest. Firstly, Portland, Oregon, where the city has an intriguing quirkiness to it and the general level of the barista knowledge is much higher than anywhere I have seen in the world. Secondly, I give a nod to Turin, Italy, and not necessarily for the taste of the coffee, but rather its incredible coffee culture. There are tiny cafés everywhere."

Back home, Cape Town seems to have become the 'capital' of the South African coffee scene. "I am not sure I'd add it to a 'top coffee capitals' list just yet, but it definitely has a thriving coffee community, which is great to see. I believe that as time goes by and South Africans continue to embrace a culture of good coffee, Cape Town could also become known around the globe for its coffee as well as its other famous tourist attractions," he concludes.

Having trained at the London School of Coffee, Brown, together with his brother Andrew, runs six different workplace coffee bars under the banner of The Daily Buzz. They have been operational since 2006 and have built up a wealth of experience, both in running their venues as well as predicting what will and will not work for their clients.

For further information, go to www.thedailybuzz.co.za.

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