

Coffee more than a caffeine buzz in shops across region

Waterloo Region Record

Coffee is big business in Canada

Canadians love their coffee.

It's a \$5-billion business annually in Canada, says the Coffee Association of Canada. Here's how those billions breaks down:

Grocery and retail stores sell an estimated \$900 million a year

Restaurants and eateries sell \$3.5 billion to \$4 billion

Office coffee sales are estimated at \$325 million to \$400 million

4,000 to 5,000 jobs in importing, roasting and manufacturing coffee

160,000 to 200,000 jobs in coffee service industries.

Only tap water is a more popular beverage for Canadians older than 16, the coffee association says.

Here's data from the association's 2013 Canadian Coffee Drinking Study:

65 per cent of adults consumed coffee in the last day; 78 per cent say they've had some in the last week

Coffee drinkers consume on average 3.2 cups daily

Traditional coffee is the most common coffee type consumed (55 per cent), espresso-based coffee (12 per cent), instant traditional coffee (nine per cent), iced/frozen blended coffee (six per cent) and decaffeinated coffee (five per cent)

78 per cent of Canadians drank coffee at home the day before; 37 per cent drank out of home (Only Italians drinks more coffee outside home)

32 per cent of Canadians drank an espresso-based specialty coffee in the previous week; cappuccinos (16 per cent) and lattes (14 per cent) were most popular.

53 per cent of coffee is made in a drip brewer machine.

25 per cent of coffee was prepared in single-cup machines, which are growing in popularity.

Single-cup brewer ownership is 20 per cent in Canada, compared to 12 per cent in the U.S.

Record staff

Aaron Schwab doesn't have to wear his coffee passion on his sleeve.

It's tattooed on the Kitchener photographer's leg: an all-seeing eye hovers over a life-size cup and the words "Liquid God."

"I don't remember the last day I went without a cup of coffee."

He's not alone. Two-thirds of adult Canadians say they've drank a cup of coffee over the preceding day; on average we sip 3.2 cups daily. Canadians rank ninth in the world in annual coffee consumption in 2006, according to worldmapper.org. We consume 6.1 kilograms of coffee each, compared to 4.1 kilograms in the U.S. Finland residents are tops worldwide, at 12 kilograms a year.

And if the growing number of coffee shops around the Waterloo-Wellington



Monica and Graham Braun own the Monigram Coffee Roasters in the downtown Galt area of Cambridge. The shop features its own coffee bean roaster.



Roastmaster Luis Molina roasts coffee beans at Eco-Coffee in Kitchener.



Ian Wood loads his coffee roaster with raw green coffee beans under the range hood in his Cambridge home. Ventilation is essential for the roasting process.



Raw green coffee beans tumble as they roast in a portable roaster in Ian Wood's Cambridge home.



area are any indication — there's well over 100 across the district — it's black gold here, too.

Local coffee aficionados like Schwab are becoming more educated about coffee — really good, fresh coffee. Where were the beans grown? How was it prepared? How was it served? Just like picking a good wine for dinner or sampling locally brewed craft beer.

Most days, Schwab drops by an independent coffee shop to soak in the atmosphere, read a book and to sometimes meet a client — a place where there's a good chance he knows the barista by name. Like Café Pyrus or Yeti Café in Kitchener. Or Death Valley's Little Brother in Waterloo. Sometimes, he drives south to Monigram Coffee Roasters in Cambridge.

"I do feel very welcome. I can sit drink a cup of coffee with my friends. It does feel a bit like my second living room."

A teacher at Conestoga College stirred Schwab's interest in coffee seven years ago, with talk of home roasting and grinding of beans, then careful brewing. Then Schwab dropped by Pyrus on Charles Street one night years ago, where he learned a bit about how to systematically taste and savour coffee, identifying where it grew and how it was roasted.

He's far from an expert at 27. "I'm just wide-eyed and fascinated by coffee," the Kitchener photographer says.

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There's more to your morning cup of coffee than a warm feeling and maybe a caffeine buzz.

In your hand is your tiny part of a massive, globe-girdling agricultural and industrial economy, says Stuart McCook, a history professor at the University of Guelph.

"Why are we drinking something from beans from a plant that originated in Ethiopia? As consumers we are participating in an environmental relationship that spans the world. It is never just a simple cup of coffee."

Coffee emerged as a popular drink in the Middle East in the 14th century. Coffee houses became secular meeting places in Islamic countries, where alcohol wasn't permitted. Coffee spread north into Christian Europe in the 17th century, where the alcohol-free stimulant was embraced, McCook said.

Coffee houses became "a place neither controlled by the church and state where people could get together and talk," which religious and political leaders feared, he said.

King Charles II of England tried to ban London's coffee shops in 1676. The edict roiled the city and nearly led to overthrow of the monarchy. Charles backed down two days before his proclamation was to take effect. By 1700, there were more than 2,000 coffee shops, says Mark Pendergrast in

Uncommon Grounds

Coffee followed Europeans as they travelled around the world, McCook said. Since it was easy to roast coffee beans, the "social ritual" of serving coffee at home became more popular in North America than drinking out.

By the early 20th century, coffee became big business around the globe. Preparation of beans moved out of the home to easy-open cans on store shelves. Convenience trumped craft.

But starting in the 1980s, coffee became part of the simmering backlash to highly processed, corporate food. Specialty coffee shops popped up, where staff told the story of the beans in the bags. Not just pointing to the cream and sugar on the counter.



Green coffee beans have turned deep brown as they tumble and roast in a portable roaster in Ian Wood's Cambridge home.



Ian Wood's just-roasted beans turn into a dark shot of espresso.



Ian Wood gets ready to tamp freshly roasted and ground coffee beans in his Cambridge home. It's a blend of 25 per cent Ethiopian beans and 75 per cent Guatemalan beans.



The spent pucks of coffee grounds are discarded from the coffee maker at Ian Wood's Cambridge home.



Ian Wood pulls a fresh shot of espresso from his coffee machine inside his Cambridge home.



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Local food blogger Andrew Coppolino was pleasantly surprised when he counted all the coffee shops in Kitchener and Waterloo a few years ago.

There was something like 20 coffee shops in downtown Kitchener alone, said the creator of waterlooregioneats.com.

"Only two of those were chain coffee shops," he said. "I think what's happening is we've become more aware about food in general — local, natural food, healthy eating."

We can't get locally grown coffee beans, "but we want coffee that has local touch to it."

That reality has pushed chains to up their coffee quality, chasing what's happening at more locally owned coffee houses, he says.

Look at the effort McDonalds put into making their coffee better — then giving it away to entice customers in the door.

Then there's the ongoing Timmies transformation, where hard plastic chairs are fast giving way to comfy seats in café-styled eateries, with awnings over street-front windows. Canada's fast food giant is also nudging customers to slow down, not gulp and go. Free wireless internet encourages lingering over that new dark roast coffee on the menu.

Yes, it sounds a lot like what Starbucks has been doing for a decade. It was it was Seattle coffee star that gave local coffee entrepreneurs encouragement and confidence to pour something better.

"It's independents that are raising the bar for coffee flavours, coffee creation," Coppolino says. "People are interested in a real coffee experience, not a big coffee experience."

The game for coffee shops is educating customers to seek ethical quality and entice them with new taste experiences, says Bill Barrett, founder of Guelph's Planet Bean.

"Palates are developing. People are becoming coffee geeks," Barrett said.

Planet Bean started roasting in Guelph in 1997. Today, Barrett sells specialty coffees at three locations and ships bags of beans to 200 customers across the district.

Down Highway 7 in Kitchener, Edward Denyer fires up his industrial-sized coffee roaster three times a week. More than 400 kilograms a week are cooked under the watch of a trained roastmaster.

Denyer is co-owner of Eco-Coffee, which sells green and roasted beans out the door of 300 Mill St.

The company also wholesales coffee across the city to specialty supermarkets and stores, along with placing coffee serving equipment in offices.

The economy may have been soft over the past few years, but that hasn't scared customers away from coffees sometimes costing \$20 a pound.

"Everyone from all walks of life appreciates a good cup of coffee," says Denyer.

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After 30 years of buying mocha pots and French presses, coffee grinders and chrome espresso machines, Ian Wood finally figured out the key to making a great cup of coffee.

Buy the best beans you can afford, do everything yourself, and savour the fact you're getting great coffee at a bargain a price.

Take individual pods in single-serving brewers, for example. Do the math and the cost is obscene, he says.

"Really, coffee shouldn't be like \$80 a pound. I could make better coffee by putting it through my sock because I'm using the best coffee," the Cambridge man says.

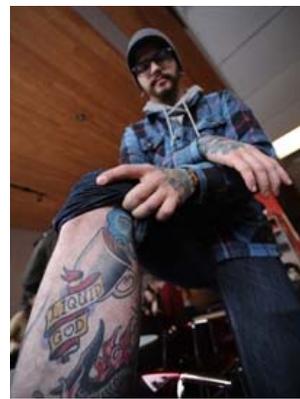
He buys quality green coffee beans for around \$10 a pound.

At home, Wood handles his \$1,700 espresso machine like a barista. Without pausing, he puts a leaf-pattern on a latte for his wife. A moment before, he made a silk-smooth medium roast Americano.

Wood's coffee journey began in the early 1980s, when he travelled in Europe after university.

No more ordering something hot and sweet to wash down a doughnut. He found real coffee houses where people lingered and talked.

"It was not about the coffee. It was preparation, the ritual, the serving it with friends," he said.



Kitchener's Aaron Schwab, who can't remember the last day he went without a cup of coffee, shows off his coffee tattoo.

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Graham Braun poured a bit of "illegal coffee" in August when he cracked open his door along a forgotten alley in downtown Cambridge.

Without a city business licence in hand, Monigram Coffee Roasters couldn't sell anything in a renovated tattoo parlour across from the bus terminal.

People were already peeking in the windows, or walking in to see what was going on as smoke puffed from the smokestack over the coffee roaster. So with seven followers on Twitter, Braun sent a message saying: "It's possible that yesterday's roast of Yirgacheffe will blow your mind. Open for pourovers or by the bag."

Within five minutes, two of his twitter followers were at the door asking for a cup. He introduced them to each other and they sat and talked over coffee for three hours. Three days later on Aug. 21, he was legal and customers kept coming.

Monigram's 24 seats face out over a city parking lot. Braun likes the view: he watches renovations underway on the rear of 150-year-old storefronts and apartments facing Main Street.

The revival started years before Monigram opened and Braun is keen to be a part of it. The area could grow into something like Toronto's Danforth, or Kitchener's Belmont Village, he said.

"We see a pretty good revitalization of the back of the buildings. It's turning the parking lot almost into a piazza"

There's already a half dozen coffee shops in the old Galt downtown, which didn't have one a decade ago.

For Braun, the more coffee shops the better — for his business and the downtown economy as a whole.

So which comes first? Coffee shops or downtown revitalization?

"The problem is trying to determine cause and effect," says Rick Haldenby, director of the University of Waterloo School of Architecture in Cambridge.

There's no hard data to explain a symbiotic connection between coffee shops and a healthy urban area, he said.

But when Haldenby looks outside office at the architecture school overlooking the Grand River in old Galt, he's happy to report coffee has followed his students over the last decade.

"When we first decided to come to Galt, you couldn't get a cappuccino anywhere," he said.

kswayze@therecord.com