



The Perfect Cup

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The History of Coffee, Part Three— SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

Coffee has had many roles in human society: it is one of the world's major commodities; it is the source of centuries of coffeehouse culture in East and West; and it has been the favored fuel of modern armies as well as modern industry.

Coffee and the Military



Coffee has long been a mainstay for soldiers. The first “instant” coffee appeared during the Civil War when soldiers reduced liquid coffee to a paste, to be reconstituted later.

World War II G.I.s were issued instant coffee with daily rations. Often, it was the only source of warmth for soldiers fighting in cold regions. The G.I.s’ steel helmets served as coffee-warming pots. Today’s Kevlar helmets aren’t suitable for heating coffee, so the U.S. Army devised another way to give the troops the comfort of hot coffee: the reusable polyethylene “hot beverage bag.”

“When it comes to coffee, soldiers have always done whatever it takes. . .”

—David Stieghan, U.S. Army historian
(Washington Post, July 3, 2006)

The Coffeehouse in History

Coffee has always been a social beverage, and coffeehouses have always been associated with lively conversation on cultural and political topics. Historically, rulers have at times viewed coffeehouses—with their free-thinking, free-speaking ways—as a threat to their authority; however, in part because of coffee’s great popularity, they usually decided to regulate and tax coffee instead of banning it.

Coffeehouses originated in the Middle East, in places such as Mecca, Damascus, and Constantinople—vibrant cities on trade routes between East and West.

It is very natural for a Man. . .to delight in that sort of Conversation which we find in Coffee-houses. . .

The Coffee-house is the Place of Rendezvous to all that live near it.

—The Spectator,
Thursday, April 26, 1711

The Spectator was the most famous “Coffee-house” newspaper of 18th-century England.

When coffee eventually made its way to Paris and London (via Armenian and Turkish traders) the European coffeehouse tradition began. The coffeehouse became a favorite venue for society gossip—but it was political and cultural activities, as well as business transactions, that gave the European and later the American coffeehouse its greatest historical impact.

Did you know...

Working with Give 2 the Troops, a national nonpartisan group, Boyd Coffee Company has regularly donated coffee for the troops—and recently took part in “Project Icy Treat.” With Give 2 the Troops providing logistics and the Bunn Company providing a frozen drink machine, Boyd Coffee Company donated 50 cases of its Coffee House Freezers® iced cappuccino and smoothie product to make morale-boosting icy treats for our troops stationed in Iraq during the hot summer months.



WHAT COFFEE MEANS TO THE WORLD

- ▶ Coffee is one of the largest globally traded commodities in the world.
 - Global area under coffee cultivation: 10.01 billion hectares
 - Global production of coffee: 16.2 billion pounds
 - Global coffee retail market: 70 billion dollars
- ▶ Coffee is grown in 80 countries and exported by 54 countries.
- ▶ There are 22 million coffee farmers globally, most working on just a few hectares of land.
- ▶ The global coffee industry generates livelihood for about 125 million people worldwide.

—adapted from *Coffee on the Hill*,
2007 Congressional Coffee Event,
National Coffee Ass'n of U.S.A., Inc.



Coffee in the Developing World

Coffee, which is grown in more than 50 countries in South America, Central America, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, plays a vital role in the economies of many developing nations. For many of the world's least developed countries, exports of coffee account for a substantial part of foreign exchange earnings—in some cases over 80 percent.

The development of coffee farmers' cooperatives and inter-institutional agreements to protect the ecosystems of coffee-producing areas are additional benefits to the social and economic infrastructure of developing countries.



Photos on this page: Scenes from coffee-growing areas in Kenya, one of the developing countries where coffee production contributes to employment and infrastructure.

NEXT MONTH'S TOPIC: Coffee Facts and Fables

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