

Origin to Cup



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A DAY IN THE CUPPING ROOM With Randy Layton and Brian Howard



*Coffee samples steep before cupping.
The table rotates for ease of access.*

5:30 a.m. Pacific Time

Check the market

The cupping room day begins early for Randy Layton and Brian Howard. At 5:30 a.m., Randy begins his daily check on the pulse of the world coffee market. He contacts suppliers and coffee industry people to get an idea of what's happening in the coffee market that day, with the goal of selecting the right coffee at the right price for our customers.

Coffee, grown and traded throughout the world, is the second most volatile commodity next to oil. Supply tracks demand very closely—there is no excess coffee available.

Securing a steady supply of high-quality beans is a complex daily challenge. In addition to quality, our buyers must also factor in availability, price, terms, and delivery capabilities. The Boyds cupping room features a live electronic feed from the New York City Coffee Futures Market to help Randy and Brian track both the NYC and London markets throughout the day.

At the heart of Boyd Coffee Company's commitment to the best in coffee is the cupping room. Here Randy Layton, Roastmaster and Vice President of Coffee Operations & Commodities, and Brian Howard, Coffee Buyer, carry out their demanding daily tasks: tracking and appraising conditions in the worldwide coffee market; testing and evaluating green coffees prior to purchase; re-sampling delivered coffees to make sure the quality matches or exceeds the original samples; developing new blends; and testing for coffee product consistency. In this issue, we will take you through a typical day in the cupping room and describe the basics of the art of cupping, the indispensable skill of our enterprise.

~ 9:30 a.m. Pacific Time

Start cupping the coffee samples of the day

Time to start the day's cupping—taste buds are keenest at mid-morning. The samples have been roasted the night before in the cupping room's micro roasters. Randy and Brian evaluate an average of 25 to 30 samples per day.

The evaluation process during cupping is getting faster with the introduction

of the **Q Coffee** Grading and Certification programs offered by the Coffee Quality Institute (CQI).



For more information on the Q Coffee Grading and Certification programs, see Volume 1, Issue 3 (March 2007) of this newsletter.



Roastmaster Randy Layton cupping samples. For more detail on the cupping process, see the back page.

Did you know...

Other activities in the cupping room include:

Welcoming customers. Tours of the Boyds roastery end in the cupping room, where customers can learn about and sample coffees.

Training and educating. Each month, Boyd Coffee Company conducts sales and new employee training.

**Boyd's
coffee**

~ 2:30 p.m.

Prepare the next day's samples



Brian Howard loads the next day's cupping samples into the micro roaster.

The next day's samples are roasted in the afternoon so they can de-gas by morning. Green coffee samples are poured into trays with description slips and lot numbers. Newly purchased green coffee deliveries get first priority, so that the Roastmaster can give approval for final use.



The cupping room micro roasters, fired by natural gas, roast the samples at between 300°F and 350°F for an average of about eight minutes.

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF CUPPING

To cup coffee:

1. Place 10 grams of fresh-roasted ground coffee in a 6-ounce cup.
2. Inhale the aroma of the dry coffee.
3. Pour nearly boiling water over the grounds.
4. Test the aroma again immediately after adding the hot water.
5. Steep the sample for 3–5 minutes, then stir briefly.
6. Inhale deeply while stirring to test the wet aroma.
7. Skim and discard coffee foam; allow to cool to tasting temperature.
8. Slurp a spoonful of the brew into your mouth to spread evenly over the tongue and into the back of the throat, covering your entire palate.
9. Hold the brew in your mouth for 3–5 seconds, then spit it out.
10. Slide your tongue across the roof of your mouth to evaluate texture and mouth feel.



Cupping is a 300 year old art. Expert cupping has been a part of Boyd Coffee Company from the start. Below, founder P.D. Boyd and his son and successor, R.P. Boyd, are shown cupping coffee circa 1960.



How coffees are rated

The four standard characteristics evaluated by cupping are **aroma**, **flavor**, **acidity** and **body**. Very specific terminology is used to evaluate these characteristics:

AROMA		FLAVOR		ACIDITY		BODY	
floral	woody	sweet	smooth	bright	flat	full	medium
spicy	nutty	fruity	sharp	vibrant	neutral	thick	neutral
fruity	musty	sour	balanced	sharp		heavy	
winey	earthy	bitter	earthy	mild		buttery	
sweet		rich	flat			thin	

—Adapted from *Origin to Cup*

NEXT MONTH'S TOPIC: A Guide to Coffee Freshness

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