

Protecting an endangered species - the barista!

The BSA has backed a campaign to champion the job of barista as a desirable career choice, following the news that we are not going to have enough baristas following a hard Brexit. The potential shortage is one of the findings of the new report, *Preserving the 'Art of Hospitality': Championing the Industry for Post-Brexit Survival*.

Ninety-seven per cent of hospitality trade managers expect a shortage of labour, principally among baristas, waiting staff and bar staff, and say that the UK does not have the workforce available to fill the shortfall. The BSA endorses the recommendation that the trade needs more 'ambassadors' to promote our sector to jobseekers as a worthwhile career choice.

The report was based on a big survey – a thousand members of the public were questioned, and their opinions balanced against the views of industry managers and owners.

The public vote rated the UK the friendliest hospitality trade in Europe, and two-thirds of the public said that this is a major factor in choosing a place to eat and drink.

However, 53 per cent see us as lacking in a strong work ethic and commitment, and regard the trade as being low-skilled, low-paid, stressful and physically demanding, and not offering a career for life.

High Speed Training, which has published the report, says our trade already has the largest staff shortfall in British industry, and has called for a campaign to show the opportunities of catering and hospitality as a career choice.

In response, the Institute of Hospitality has said that the industry has failed to find and encourage role models who will 'shout about what a great and fun career this is'.

They may have a point – typically, in the hot-beverage sector, very few people in the café trade will be able to name the UK barista champion, and nothing has been done to use our champions as a public 'face' of a trade worth working in.

"...the industry has failed to find and encourage role models who will shout about what a great and fun career this is."

- Institute of Hospitality

Another response to the report said: "Hospitality is not protected in the UK as it is in other countries. In Australia, it's taken seriously and there are unions for hospitality; in Switzerland, it's a celebrated career path."

The report says that we need to find 'ambassadors' for our catering trades.

"We need to alter the language placed around hospitality careers – the public see our jobs as low-skilled or stop-gap choices. Who better to challenge the current public perceptions than those that are already achieving great things within the industry?"

A BSA spokesman agreed that we do need these 'champions', adding: "I would willingly stand up and champion the trade. It has been a fantastic career for me and many of my colleagues."

The BSA notes that we already have potential barista ambassadors in place, and the BSA has career training in place...we just have to tell the world about them.



There have been many attempts to bring technology to the area of latte art – the purist way of drawing pictures on coffee froth is a pouring skill, for which there is a world championship, but recently several high-tech companies have attempted to 'print' illustrations on froth. The latest of these ideas now offers a digital way of producing more complex toppings than before.

This is the Ripples system, which has already been tried in America, where it claims to have achieved vast popularity through use on both coffee and cocktails, and even Guinness. It uses a wi-fi desktop printer which sits behind the counter; this features a collection of standard designs, or customers can transmit text or images, such as a 'selfie', to it from their phones.

The practicality of it is that the barista makes a standard drink, and then places the cup under the machine, which prints the image using an 'ink' of coffee extract. One American café claims to be doing 2,000 such coffees a month, for an extra dollar a cup.

(We do believe that you can find another system at the Coffee Shop Expo this month).

Watch your card-reader to avoid a new scam

A café in Cambridge has warned of a novel scam which cost them £800. A café linked to a church was conned by two teenagers who ordered £8 worth of food and asked to pay by card. When they were handed the card reader, they managed to distract the manager and enter information which showed they had been charged £800 rather than £8... but they had also entered the details of a different card. The manager saw what appeared to be evidence of a mistake on the café's part, and authorised a refund of the supposed overpayment.

After they left, the staff realised what the boys had done.

The manager has said: "we didn't notice they swapped the cards - we wouldn't have thought of that. So, be careful of what happens to these card machines when they are in the hands of customers, and be very wary of refunds, even when it looks genuine."

He has so far been unable to claim a refund from his payment processing company, saying that their customer services people don't know how to handle this situation, and indeed are not bothered.

"If we want to move towards this cashless society that everyone talks about, we have to be more careful of people exploiting that at the expense of the small business."

Has Brazil run out of coffee?

The Bloomberg international news agency has reported that Brazil's biggest grower and shipper of arabica coffee has run out of beans.

The co-operative's commercial director even told the news agency: "we don't know where the world will get coffee in the next six months." This follows the wholesaler's discovery that it has received about half a million fewer bags of coffee from farmers than it expected; however, others in the industry have told a slightly different story. Another of Brazil's exporters said: "the market has enough to meet demand until next year's crop."

Oxford installs on-street cup recycling bins

Oxford City Council will install on-street coffee cup recycling bins in their city centre next month. The programme aims to recycle six tonnes of coffee cups, roughly equivalent to 650,000 paper cups, in its first year. The project is part-funded by the Hubbub environmental organisation, which claims that only 25 per cent of single-use coffee cups are currently recycled.

Pret A Manger's new coffee cup recycling scheme will appear in 350 sites following successful trials in London, Leeds and Glasgow; it will accept cups from all brands. The brand makes a point of saying it will site collection points on the shop floor, in clear view, to encourage use.

The Rijo42 coffee company of Manchester says that only one cup in 400 is currently recycled and says that it is the first UK coffee brand to develop and launch a disposable coffee cup which can be recycled in conventional mixed-paper recycling bins, as well as composted alongside food waste.

This involves an alternative to plastic-lined cups, and uses a water-based barrier coating solution instead. The environmental charity Hubbub has commented that compostable cups in the wrong bin can actually make things worse; compostable cups in general recycling bins can break down, contaminating the rest of the recyclable waste and causing the whole batch to be rejected and sent to landfill.

We are absolutely delighted to read in the Berkshire local press that the No 6 cafe in Ascot has been collecting bras in a bid to help Kenyan women.

This is apparently very important for impoverished Kenyan women, and the charity which co-ordinates the project has already collected a thousand from the café.

But the thing we liked most of all was the local paper quote from the organiser, who reportedly said: "For so many people to have come together to help this cause... it's such an uplifting thing."

Yes, quite...

Whenever the tea-towel market makes it into the news, it's always for an odd reason. The Primark chain has come in for much derision over its London Landmarks map design - because so many landmarks were in the wrong place.

The London Eye was shown on the wrong side of the river, and so was Westminster Abbey; Big Ben was nowhere near the Houses of Parliament, and The Gherkin and St Paul's were both on the wrong side of Tower Bridge. A London walking tours guide called the tea towel 'geographically challenged'.

BSA member company Espresso Solutions has been named as 'one to watch' by the European Business Awards.

The awards scheme considers thousands of entries from thirty countries, and Espresso Solutions was one of only four British food-related companies to be highlighted among, in the organisers' words, 'the most inspirational, successful and dynamic in Europe'.

The company's founder, Ryan Page, said in his entry that he started his company 'having grown frustrated with the lack of drive and innovation in the espresso parts industry', and that he wanted the business of spare parts to be given more prominence.

Suppliers react to public scares on plastic in tea-bags

Tea brands have been quick to respond after press reports claimed that tests found that a single bag sheds billions of particles of microplastic into each cup.

BSA member company Eteaket has launched a Plastic-Free Tea Club to promote its plastic-free status, Founder Erica Moore says: "We all need to stop buying plastic tea bags. Use plastic-free leaf tea bags like ours which are made from cornstarch and never from nylon. Our inner bag is plastic-free Natureflex (wood pulp) and our cartons are recyclable. We have been plastic-free from the day we launched in 2008."

The Shibui tea company has also gone plastic-free: "many bags are adding to the single-use plastic problem that's all over the news," the company tells us. "We've used Natureflex, which is compostable and can be put in with the food waste. These are proving to be very popular, as most of our competition are still using plastic in some way."

Teapigs tells us that media reports have sparked a lot of trade enquiries, and that they were the first tea brand to be awarded the Plastic-Free Trust Mark. "This will empower consumers to make plastic-free choices. The confusion around all this, and the abundance of plastic packaging in the supermarkets, means that those with innovative packaging will now be nice and easy to spot."

Another month for odd trade 'research'...

It is another wonderful month for strange bits of beverage trade research...

We did like the claim from the Thorntons brand that hot chocolate is the fastest-growing drink in catering, up four per cent to 210 million servings in the last year. However, Thorntons says that while 62 per cent of coffee-house customers rated their hot chocolate highly, only eight per cent of hotel guests have enjoyed a 'very good' hot chocolate away from home.

"There is a real disparity between key markets and the hot chocolate experience currently on offer," says Thorntons.

Meanwhile, the Barry Callebaut brand, a BSA member company, has announced that fifty per cent of consumers say they could not live a day without chocolate. That suggests it is worthwhile for all cafe owners to look at the standard of the chocolate they serve, and shout about it.

Perhaps the month's oddest research project of all is the one which has had some members of the coffee trade in fits over social media channels. And it just shows how carelessly-phrased much 'research' can be.

This had two bizarre aspects. The first was the suggestion that 'the average person in the UK spends more than £2,000 a year in coffee shops'. Really? That would mean our café trade is worth one hundred and twenty billion pounds a year, and not even the most optimistic researcher has ever claimed that! Never trust the word 'average'!

But their main claim concerns the amount of caffeine in drinks served by the major chains. What they attempted to do was relate the caffeine content of drinks to the price charged.

The results were entertaining. "The humble Americano is a favourite among coffee lovers," say the reporters, going on to suggest that Greggs' Americano gives the customer 140.63mg of caffeine per pound spent, whereas Caffe Nero offers 'just' 32.65mg/£. But later in the research, it is noted that "Greggs do not offer an Americano, so 'black coffee' was chosen as an alternative..."

No, don't tell us all the things which could be wrong with their methodology!



The world of 'themed afternoon tea' is getting increasingly odd. A typical new service has been created in Norfolk - it is the chance to take tea with a set of alpacas. The Norfolk Alpacas organisation offers alpaca-shaped teapots and alpaca-shaped Victoria sponge cakes, with the animals beside the table. Customers are then invited to take the alpacas for a walk. The price is £25 per person.

Similarly, in Scotland there is 'Tea with Naughty Sheep', bookable on Airbnb's 'animal experiences' programme. This is set in an old stone farmhouse, and guests are joined by two Herdwick sheep.

It gets more interesting - the website *travelandleisure.com* has now suggested that among the world's tea experiences, customers can have afternoon tea with the Queen.

Never having been invited to a royal garden party, we investigated - it turns out to be a clever stunt by Madame Tussaud's, where tea is served in a mocked-up palace setting, complete with Her Majesty.

The Redditch Tea Test has been promoted by a local councillor as an exercise in assessing personal strength and flexibility. Local residents have been invited to take the test to see how steady they are. The test involves such tasks as walking downstairs, standing on one leg while the kettle boils, carrying a cup of tea to a chair, sitting down... and getting back up again. We do hope that local café staff are encouraged to try it.

Chairman's comment:

Are we really taking care of our own front-line people?

I was struck by a remark from a coffee roaster this month. Extract Coffee, who were talking about things to come in the trade, happened to mention: "barista well-being and mental health will become key talking points for the coffee industry next year. This is starting to feature as a discussion point at coffee events, and will continue and develop throughout 2020."

That intrigued me.

We currently hear a vast amount about 'mental health' in the media. In reference to our own trade, it even appeared in the new report *The Art of Hospitality*, which we talk about on another page. It is cropping up everywhere, and people who would never before have referred to such things now say openly, and you hear this a lot on television, "I've had mental health problems..." This is happening to such a degree that last month, a regional daily paper warned that 'coverage of these issues, handled incorrectly, can do more harm than good'.

So how and where does it apply in our trade?

I can think of several aspects, covering all levels from baristas to business owners. Indeed, one can well appreciate the various stresses placed on anyone who works behind the counter – those who spend their working lives facing customers will tell you that the public can be a very odd bunch indeed. And opening your own place is just asking for any amount of stress – I remember one first-time operator protesting: "As soon as I opened, I found myself responsible for things I never knew existed!"

I asked the opinion of a barista of some standing – a previous British champ, no less, who runs his own well-respected coffee and food outlet, and was surprised by the forcefulness of his response. He told me: "I'm inclined to think contemporary barista culture attracts people more likely to have mental health issues."

I think I see his point. Barista work can attract those who may be susceptible to stress, in that if you are the kind of person to spend your life worrying over dosage to within a gramme, and over temperatures within a tenth of a degree, then you may possibly be considered something of an obsessive.

However, Extract agreed that the issue is far wider than that.

"Barista work can be emotionally challenging, fast-paced, physically exhausting and all too often, undervalued," said their marketing manager, Gemma Screen. "Our mission has always been to Make Coffee Better in every possible way, and this includes making the coffee trade better for baristas. Giving baristas the right support and environment for success is an essential part of making coffee better."

"Mental well-being is increasingly referred to in the media, and the hospitality industry is now starting to look

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at how it can better support its people - this summer, I've been delighted to see mental health in hospitality spoken about in pop-up events in cafes like Hart's Bakery, at the Coffee House Project and at PX+ Festival. We'll see much more of this."

Laura Hart of Hart's Bakery confirmed to me that her idea was to create a 'safe space' in which those in the trade could talk openly, and exchange ideas for supporting staff and colleagues. "We held an informal panel discussion which covered many topics including healthy working environments, mental health in hospitality, the importance of awareness and communication between staff, managers and owners, and ways for individuals to look after their own health. This is hopefully the first of many similar events – perhaps future ones will include input from people or charities involved in mental health work."

The subject has already been addressed elsewhere. In America, they are a little ahead of us, and a roasting company in California held a seminar on the subject, pointing out that while all employers know that physical first-aid expertise is important in the workplace, there is little understanding of the area of 'mental health first-aid'. Baristas, it was said, work in a taxing environment, and are susceptible to panic attacks... at the same time, they may have to handle customers who may be having crises of their own. The result of their seminar was a detailed manual on mental health issues which might occur in the café environment, and suggested resources for 'de-escalation strategies'.

"I think we're now seeing honest discussion of the highs and lows of work as a barista," Gemma Screen told us. "There are the impacts of working weekends and regularly-changing shift patterns, the impacts of working in

a fast-paced environment, and of not necessarily having barista skills fully recognised and appreciated. We expect our baristas to be passionate and knowledgeable, to craft and present each drink perfectly, to tell the story of the coffee and to provide the customer with an incredible experience... and we expect them to do this at pace!

"They must be given the support they need to feel fulfilled in their role."

A simplistic question: what should be done?

"Talking is a great start," she responded. "As a business you need to consider whether you have the right mechanisms in place for someone to talk openly about any extra support they may need. We need to create environments where our people feel valued and respected, but also empowered to ask for help when they need it. Investing in their personal development goes a long way."

"Addressing this will not only make the business of coffee better for the talented individuals working in our industry, but in the long run means a better customer experience too."

And that is a very practical business point. Apart from the moral responsibility we hold for the well-being of our staff, creating better working experience for the team not only makes life better for them, but communicates itself to the customer in the form of a better café atmosphere. And the result of a more desirable environment for the customer is a successful business for all.

Do our members expect the BSA to take a lead in this, I ask?

- Steve Slark,
BSA Chairman

Sustainability Trail at the Coffee Shop Expo

A feature of the Coffee Shop Innovation Expo, which runs at London's ExCel arena from 19-20 November, is the new Sustainability Trail. This involves a group of around thirty exhibitors, dotted throughout the show, who specialise in sustainable products. The aim is to provide a series of ideas to help a beverage business become more environmentally-conscious.

The sustainable ideas on show include biodegradable packaging and energy, electric delivery bikes and food waste.

A typical exhibitor is RCup, a re-usable long-life travel mug. It is, the inventor says, a matter of 'reinventing rubbish' – the cup is manufactured from used cups. Thus, says the inventor, 'we have stimulated demand for the once worthless used disposable paper cup; this increases the value of used paper cups, which enables recycling firms to invest in the infrastructure required to recycle them'.

Elsewhere the One Cup uses what is called a 'loaning app'. This allows customers to find out which cafes will sell them a takeaway drink in a One Cup; they can return this cup to any other participating café, where it will be washed and reused. The company cites trial projects in which reusable cup use at one cafe increased from a single-figure percentage of sales to over half.

Another company on the Trail is Essity UK, which is a specialist in catering hygiene - paper towels, tissues, and so on. "There are few businesses where hygiene has such a direct impact on the bottom line as restaurants and cafés," says the company.

A curious company in the sustainability trail is Marke Creative Merchandise, which offers branded and promotional items from the most unexpected original materials - notebooks from apple peel, socks from discarded fishing nets and bags from recycled plastics.

The Coffee Shop Expo is at ExCel on 19-20 November.



What is the Raf coffee? It is, according to the Monin syrup brand, "a trend not to be missed - although not yet well known in the UK, it is proving to be a best seller in other parts of the world."

It turns out that the Raf is made from espresso, milk, cream, probably sugar, and maybe an optional flavoured syrup, and the curious part of it is that all of these are mixed in a jug and then steamed together.

It is, we are told, Russia's favourite coffee, and was inspired twenty years ago by Rafael Timberbaev, who challenged his barista to create a new kind of milky coffee. When the café put it on their menu, they named it after him.

The drink spread across the café trade there, with baristas adding their own individuality – vanilla sugar has become a standard addition, and Raf drinkers report having experienced versions involving lavender, basil, citrus, honey, almond, and even grappa.

Drury has created a new kind of quick-brew tea-bag, to overcome the big problem in selling takeaway tea – what the customer does with the bag. Their new Gunwharf Breakfast is a 4oz pyramid bag, holding a blend of Assam, Kenyan and Ceylon, and the company says that with stirring, a 12oz cup will give 'a damned good extraction' in thirty seconds. Thus, a commuter at a station kiosk can quickly take a few seconds to stand on one side, agitate the brew, and throw the bag into the rubbish bin before taking the cup on to the train.

The entertaining gems of coffee's history

One of the biggest recent panics in the coffee trade went almost unnoticed on this side of the Atlantic. It was the effect of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which caused vast destruction in New Orleans – including the closure of the main coffee-importing dockyard. There was, apparently, a brief national crisis when it was suggested that this might cause America to run out of coffee!

This is one of the many jewels to be found in the new book by Jonathan Morris, the professor at the University of Hertfordshire who has created a name for himself as a speaker on the history of the coffee trade.

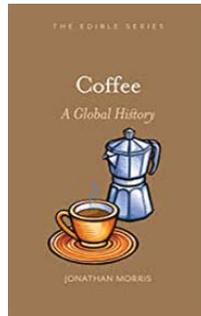
The potential problem with any book about the history of coffee is that it might well cover a vast amount of things that people in the trade know already, and in a dry academic way.

This one does cover all the expected history, but the enjoyable part of it is the entertaining sidelines which crop up here and there. In the expected history of the coffee bar, we are happy to learn further details of Pasqua Rosee, the Armenian who opened the first London coffee house, in 1650-something. His open-air coffee stall in London served coffee described as 'hot and unpleasant but with a good after-relish, and causing some breaking of wind in abundance'. (Kindly remember that when planning your next coffee cart.)

And Morris also notes that the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie used coffee revenues to 'impose his authority' in the 1930s – however, notes Morris, Selassie was unable to resist the Italian Fascist occupation, 'whose legacy is the espresso bars of Addis Ababa'.

We did not know, I confess, that Ceylon was a coffee-growing nation before leaf-rot set in, and the farmers scrapped their plants and turned instead to tea. Coffee's loss was the tea trade's gain. Many years later, notes Morris, the coffee crisis of 1998 had a rather different side-effect in Colombia, where farmers also ripped up their coffee trees... but they replaced them with coca, and coffee's loss was cocaine's gain.

And what did Brazil do to reduce its massive coffee surplus in the 1930s? They used it to fire steam engines



hauling trains; bet they smelled interesting as they went past.

The history of coffee in America has its novel aspects, too – in the civil war, soldiers had ten cups of coffee a day to stimulate them, and on the single bloodiest day of the war, one side was energised by a young artilleryman passing among the troops handing out coffee. The result, said his CO, was 'like putting a new regiment in the fight'. (And what happened to that young coffee-serving soldier? He went on to become president of the USA – tell that to your baristas!)

We have great sympathy for the Hill Brothers company, whose pre-war coffee packaging included this stern warning: 'this coffee is turned over to you in perfect condition; here our responsibility ceases, and unless you will co-operate with us by seeing that the coffee is made properly, our efforts and your money will be wasted'. That's telling 'em! Wonder if any brands would dare to do that today?

And why do Italians drink their coffee standing up at the bar? There is, believe it or not, a reason - it's to do with sales tax.

This little book is full of such gems. Coffee history does not have to be a dry subject!

Coffee: A Global History by Jonathan Morris, is £10.99. Readers who order from <http://www.reaktionbooks.co.uk> and quote the code BSA20 at the checkout get a 20 percent discount.

The newest coffee festival will be in... Otley, Yorkshire. The event will be on Saturday, April 25, and the organisers say that they will be showing that Otley is 'a true coffee town'.

"Otley Coffee Culture is a not-for-profit venture and there will be coffee talks, latte art and other coffee competitions along with good music, children's activities, and stands with coffee-related products," they tell us.

At the launch event this month, it was noted that four of Otley's coffee shops have made the top 20 cafes in Leeds, rated by visitor reviews.

One supporter, Paul Meikle-Janney from the local Dark Woods Coffee company, told us: "it looks very promising – a group of professional Otley locals wanting to create a good event for the town, and not too geeky!"

Most coffee roasters we know started in simple ways, and one who began by roasting beans over a camp stove in his shed has now created a blend in honour of the Llangollen Food Festival, which he says is the event that gave him his big break. Tim Parry of Mug Run Coffee, a Welsh-speaker of Prestatyn, began to sell his blends at craft fairs and markets, but after his first appearance at the Llangollen event graduated to an industrial unit in Rhyl, and is now producing in one afternoon what used to take him a week.

Café owners in Glasgow have been warned that thieves are getting ever more daring in their raids on catering businesses. In one case last month, a thief walked out of a city tea shop with its safe, which he succeeded in opening in a nearby alley, where he dumped the safe itself. The local police say that in recent months, there has been 'a noticeable rise' in opportunistic thefts from cafes, involving floats, tills, charity boxes and the like.

Do we, at this end of the coffee chain, bear responsibility for what happens at the farming end? One of the most active European brands, already known for its rainforest conservation work, says that coffee is a tool for conservation... and has set out to prove it.

Re-creating a coffee farm

A BSA member company has made a quite remarkable move – it has taken over, or virtually re-created, a coffee farm. The company is Miko, and through its Puro brand, we have become quite used to the idea of the company's work at origin, saving areas of rainforest and rescuing frogs that nobody knew existed... but this project is a quite remarkably complex combination of coffee business and environmental work. It is, the company has said, a matter of seeing its organic farming methods 'healing the land'.

One of the most fascinating roles in the coffee trade is that held by Andy Orchard at Miko. So far as we can tell, having followed his activities for several years, he seems to spend a large amount of his time in the rainforest.

"Since 2014 I have been looking to create a Puro coffee farm," he told us. "Initially I was trying to create it within our Guatemalan rainforest reserve, where a coffee farm once stood but had been destroyed by coffee leaf rust. That project just didn't come together.

"Later, I shared with our partners in Honduras my vision of finding a piece of beautiful rainforest land and an area that had been deforested by less-sustainable forms of agriculture. I wanted to show how coffee can be a beneficial tool for conservation.

"A piece of land there was identified and we were asked to help support it. Some beautiful primary forest, a five-year-old organic coffee farm, and an area deforested for growing grain and maize. They were desperate to buy it. They saw they could profit quite highly from it and inject the money from sales into conservation.

"The land would go into ownership of both our rainforest NGO there and a Fairtrade organic co-operative, of whom we were buying their total coffee harvest. The profit from the coffee sales to us would be returned to community and conservation projects. We ended up doing it through Puro World Land Trust funds."

How is their organic farming 'healing the land'? Miko's corporate statement refers to reforestation with native trees to provide shade, encouraging the return of native birds and wildflower species, integrating native bee species and hives, returning composted coffee cherry pulp as organic fertiliser, and enriching the lives of local species through a natural lagoon.

"If you create a healthy eco-system, farm in harmony with nature and maintain balance, things should go smoothly," argues Andy Orchard. "Here's a few examples – birds eat the larvae of the coffee borer beetle, so why are birds not encouraged to reside in coffee farms? So the first thing I wanted to implement was re-planting of native trees and planting some tree species that provide food to birds.

"Coffee leaf rust spores spread by wind, amongst other things. So, maintaining healthy boundaries of natural forest between farms should help limit this spreading. Coffee leaf rust attacks weak and old coffee plants first, but with a healthy ecosystem there is no need for plants to



Miko's own rather charming illustration of its new farm

be weak - they are being supplied everything they need.

"Then, when you analyse the carbon footprint within the coffee industry you will see that it is cultivation that is the massive contributor (not roasting, not shipping). But coffee can actually be a carbon sink not a carbon producer... when done right. So everything points to growing in harmony with nature."

A major part of this is getting through to all parts of the coffee chain, right to coffee-house operators and their customers.

"The coffee farm 'takeover' is an initiative to bridge the world of coffee consumerism with the world of coffee growing," remarks Andy Orchard. "To help bring about greater equality, with real stories told by high street coffee sites via social media and instore."

This work is important, he says. A formal comment from Miko says that: "an inseparable connection exists between mankind and nature, but in this day and age many might argue that modern farming demonstrates a disconnect that fails to honour this sacred relationship. Finca de Puro Café in Honduras is a co-creation that seeks to further harmonise Fairtrade Organic coffee farming with nature."

Andy Orchard puts it more bluntly.

"It's quite disgusting on some levels to see what has gone on in the coffee industry - many farmers being forced into what I would term modern-day slavery, receiving no recognition for their efforts whatsoever, companies hiding farmers and their stories behind big global brands that have actually played a leading role in the acceleration of man-made global warming... which is making it harder and harder to actually grow coffee.

"The world is in the ****, and some people are going to have to be the ones to help change it. And since coffee and society seem so interwoven, it's a privileged industry within which to work on it."

The flavour of success

The flavoured-syrup market is still increasing, if slowly. What can beverage operators do to fully exploit the profit potential?

Scoop Malone was recently in a little local coffee house – although it's in a one-horse town, it is a coffee-house which has built quite a decent reputation since opening two or three years ago.

They have a little rack of four flavours beside the espresso machine, so Scoop asked for a vanilla latte. The barista, probably the Saturday girl, made an ordinary latte in more or less a decent way; then she reached for the flavoured syrup bottle and was annoyed to find that nothing came out of the dispenser at the top. It was all stuck up – clearly they don't sell many flavours! So she removed the pump, with a bit of effort, and then poured a rather hopeful random glug of it straight into the pre-prepared latte.

The result was possibly the very worst drink this writer has ever been served in twenty years of writing about coffee! By contrast, the best drink Scoop has ever been served was an exquisitely-prepared almond latte in a tiny café in Edinburgh.

Which tells us, a BSA spokesman has commented, there are essentially two things to know about flavoured syrups – that, handled correctly, they can turn an ordinary drink into a great and profitable one; and that handled badly, the result can be quite brutal.

Which leads us to ask: in conventional barista training, how much time is devoted to the addition of flavours? Certainly, flavours are derided by many coffee purists, who avoid them entirely - but if it is a product that sells, then it should be trained.

And it is a product that sells. One brand tells us that they see the market increasing at about two per cent a year; the main independent wholesaler in the sector, who handles four or five brands, refers simply to 'a continuing rise'.

At Routin 1883, the new distributor is Dandelion Food Imports, where we find a familiar name in syrups – Darril Ling, who spent eighteen years with Monin, leading to his tag of 'Mister Syrups'. "The consumer has not lost their appetite for a flavoured sweetener," says Dandelion. "It is in flavour profile that consumption has altered – salted and sugar-free have grown."

"More low-sugar or zero-sugar is being sold," confirms the wholesaler Jonathan Money at Cream Supplies. "Salted caramel is definitely now in the top ten, and a new winter spice from Monin is gaining ground against the usual pumpkin and gingerbread at this time of year."

Sugar-free is up, agrees Beyond the Bean, founder of the Sweetbird brand (and also involved with the relatively new Bristol Syrups). "A national contract caterer switched their entire range to our Sweetbird sugar-free syrup, and said that their in tasting panels, all participants agreed that the taste is at least as good. We have also been working with several NHS hospitals on introducing drinks featuring our



"There are essentially two things to know about flavours – that, handled correctly, they can turn an ordinary drink into a great and profitable one; and that handled badly, the result can be quite brutal."

syrups where the offering complies with their standards on sugar intake."

All the syrups brands offer creative recipes... but does anyone actually use them? Realistically, how many cafes see these ideas and think: 'yes, that could be our house special for the winter?'

"Recipes are a source of inspiration, and there is definitely creativity taking place," says Ed Grimes for Routin. "Operators run barista championships, with the challenge of creating a new drink from existing ingredients, to put the winning drink on to their seasonal menu. The syrup brands encourage this as a showcase, hoping one flavour may become 'the new caramel!'"

And some café owners mix flavours, says Jon Money: "Just look at what Costa is doing with its Bonfire Spiced Latte – adding spiced syrup and, I think, caramel. Some independents are taking this same idea of mixing different syrups together to make new flavours... yes, there is creativity going on."

At Beyond the Bean they see the same: "we have several chains using our syrups in our recipes that are now part of their main drinks menu, and our Barista Bootcamps focus heavily this. Our next sessions are scheduled for February/March 2020.

"But it is very important to present the result as a whole drink – customers are not inspired by an 'add syrup' option. Offer them a Black Forest hot chocolate, or Millionaire's Latte (that's caramel and speculoos syrups) and they will appreciate that work has gone into them, and your price and profit will reflect this."

This is good advice, says the BSA's trainer Jon Skinner.

"The big rule for syrups is to name the drink. No-one will ever come in to your café and ask for a mocha with coconut syrup... but if you put Paradise Mocha on your menu, that's the same thing, and now it'll sell!"

There have been several recent good ideas. Sweetbird has introduced a speculoos syrup, which is the flavour of those little spiced shortcrust biscuits you see on saucers; it works well in a hot chocolate.

Monin notes that, rather surprisingly, syrups have now entered the flat white sector, though it recommends that a little testing here is a good idea. "Some of the more delicate ones like vanilla might not hold up as well with the extra coffee strength, but last winter saw Starbucks do a cinnamon spice flat white, and West Cornwall Pasty Company did a 'festive sparkle' flat white. Pret did a pumpkin spice flat white. Roasted hazelnut, salted caramel and macaroon will all work well."

So what syrup training or guidance is useful? Clearly, as from Scoop's experience, there must guidance regarding dosage, because not all syrups require the same.

Adams and Russell of Liverpool make the valid point on their website that "there's a fine line between not tasting the syrup at all, and making the drink just too sweet to drink." So, they say, when creating a drink, it is always better to start with less... you may find that one menu item requires one tablespoon, and another may require three. The rule is – test!

Dosage is not an exact science. You can easily find that where one brand may recommend a single pump, another's may need the equivalent of three teaspoons to get the syrup flavour to have any impact.

And when do you add it? Some trainers say put the syrup in first, then the espresso, then the milk. Some baristas like steaming the syrup with the milk, and others don't; one trainer advocates adding the syrup to the base ingredient (the espresso shot or a hot chocolate) and steaming the milk separately, because syrup can contaminate the steam wand if the barista doesn't clean it carefully.

One trainer did suggest to us that by adding the flavour to the made drink, 'less goes further'. This horrified Jon Money at Cream Supplies: "a syrup is very stable at temperature, so it can be added to milk as it is steamed, and this will ensure it is dissolved into the milk. Adding it at the end means you have to mix it in, which will give an uneven distribution, probably meaning a lot is left at the

bottom of the cup... This would actually result in more being used to achieve the correct sweetness and flavour."

Some trainers warn against the limited shelf-life of flavours, and we have certainly seen the stickiness which comes from a rarely-opened bottle.

"Our Sweetbird shelf life is two years unopened, but once opened, use them within eight weeks," say Beyond the Bean. "Once opened, there's no reason why, if kept sealed with the original lid or a pump and stored in a cool place away from direct sunlight, they cannot be consumed up until their best-before date.

"But if you expose syrups to air, sunlight and high heat - and it is common to find them next to the espresso machine! - then the flavour and colour can degrade."

Care for those pumps as well, says Jon Money. "Syrups will eventually develop mould, and those with natural ingredients develop mould far quicker than those which just have artificial flavours – so, check the ingredients and once it is opened, mark the bottle with a use-by date based on the ingredients. Put syrups away at night and away from heat sources in the day... but keeping syrups in a fridge can cause crystallisation of the sugar. And wash your syrup pumps in a dishwasher after each use."

How many cafes actually do this, we wondered?

"Pumps can be switched between finished bottles and a new one of the same flavour, but the pump should be replaced after being used on six bottles," says Beyond the Bean. "The pumps can be washed between switching, but this is not recommended as even when thoroughly dried there is a risk of contamination."

"It would be useful to find an independent coffee restaurant and run a totally blind comparison between the brands..."

How practical is it for a coffee shop to obtain samples of flavours from different brands, partly to compare ingredients, and partly to experiment with their dosages of each, so that they can have an in-house ruling along the lines of: 'this flavour goes in our 8oz latte, and our standard dosage is X'?

Not surprisingly, one brand protested about the cost and practicalities of sending out samples, though there is a good case for arguing that if a supplier wants your trade, then they have to accept giving samples.

But several suppliers rather sportingly agreed that comparison is a good thing. And indeed, one brand even come up with a very bold suggestion.

This supplier said to us, hopefully: "It would be useful to find an independent coffee restaurant and run a totally blind comparison between Monin, Routin, Simply, Davinci, and Sweetbird."

Who's going to take this idea up?!

Capitalising on the 'hound pound'

This very month, in two branches of Costa in market towns perhaps six miles apart, we have seen two very different notices on the doors. One says, amusingly but bluntly: "no smoking; no dogs. Definitely no smoking dogs!" The other Costa has just posted a sign saying: "dogs now allowed from September to April. On leads, and accompanied – no barking."

One wonders how they propose to enforce that, but it does show the difference of opinion between cafes, even under the same banner, on the value of the 'hound pound'.

Is it worthwhile establishing whether your coffee-house should be dog-friendly? The figures suggest it is; and yet, informal research suggests that not enough are doing so.

A quarter of British families have dogs, and according to American Express, nearly half of them take their dogs on holiday with them. A holiday company has reported that enquiries about pet-friendly venues has doubled; an online holiday website has reported that one of the three biggest holiday-related search questions on the internet is 'dog-friendly'. Informal research through a dog-owners' forum this month tells us that dog-owners see dog-friendly cafes increasing, but not enough (South Yorkshire and Coventry were highlighted as needing improvement in this).

One reported statistic, and we have seen no back-up evidence for it, suggests that British hotels could increase their revenues by 30 per cent if they allowed dogs.

When the Kennel Club surveyed 250 businesses, they reported that 97 per cent of dog-friendly venues believed the move had added value to their businesses. In the pub sector, eighty per cent of pub managers said dog-friendliness improved the atmosphere of their site and increased levels of social interaction between guests. Three-quarters of others said they would change their policy if they knew owners would keep dogs well-behaved.

A very recent experience is that of a BSA member business, the Reeds Homestore café in Downham Market, where managing director Jim Carlile tells us: "up until six weeks ago we only accepted dogs with visually-impaired customers, but we had a management meeting and decided to create a dog-friendly area inside the store adjoining the café. Within a day of announcing it on Facebook we had 8,000 (eight thousand!) 'likes', so we knew we were on to a winner.

"Since then we have doubled the size of the dog-friendly area and it has increased sales, gone down well with our existing customers, brought in a lot of new customers, and increased our overall profile through press articles."

A lot of information is exchanged between dog-owners, and there are many internet sites covering the subject: Dylan's Dorset is a clever online blog 'written' by a miniature Schnauzer; the human organiser of Doggy Devon has spoken at tourist conferences, and in East Anglia the daddy of them all is the Barking Bugle, edited by a team of spaniels. Questions about dog-friendly venues on these pages receive a lot of comments and suggestions – these people talk to each other and share recommendations (or otherwise!)



Dog owners talk to each other and share their recommendations ...and otherwise!

The sign is sold online by enjoyfowey.co.uk

Of cafes who are not dog-friendly, research has shown that 76 per cent are worried about health and safety regulations, because they have no idea what the rules are. We can attest to one very well-regarded espresso shop in south Cornwall, who looked at us when we entered and said: "er... we can't allow dogs in... er, we're a food place." To their credit, they later settled on a dog-friendly policy and acknowledged it benefitted them greatly, but at the time, they didn't have a clue. And they are not alone.

What the law actually says is that only food preparation areas are out of bounds. Access to areas where food is served and sold is at the discretion of the site manager. And, surprisingly, the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health has even said that EU legislation does not specifically prevent dogs from being in a kitchen either – simply not 'when preparing food', and so long as the management can show procedures are in place to wash and disinfect work surfaces and cooking utensils before any food prep takes place. This, the OSH remarked, is sensible, as it allows live-in managers to still have pets, so long as they demonstrate proper hygiene care.

Essentially, you can forbid dogs if you want to, but you can't say the law tells you to, although if you really don't want dogs in your café, it is possible to claim a genuine justifiable reason. If, for example, you are very cramped for space, then dogs might be a trip hazard to your waiting staff. However, you have to be very careful indeed how you interpret this for guide or assistance dogs.

In Australia, one member of parliament has been arguing the matter for six years. In a debate he started, one speaker recalled the infamous story of Gough Whitlam, then prime minister, at an audience with the Queen. One of her corgis loudly broke wind, and the Aussie PM tactlessly remarked, "that was obviously the corgi."

Her Majesty coolly replied: "Who else?"

A BSA ready-reference directory...

refer to the BSA website for more details of these companies

3M Water Filtration Division 01344 858000 www.3m.co.uk/filtration
Allpure Filters 01252 519955 www.allpurefilters.com
Arden Coffee 01246 25 28 32 www.iwantacoffeemachine.com
Barry Callebaut 01244 370500 www.barrycallebautvending.co.uk
Brew-it Group 01246 454400 www.brew-it-group.co.uk
Brita 01869365840 www.brita.co.uk
Bryan Stockley Consultancy 01507 466990 <http://www.bscltd.co.uk>
BWT 07831382929 www.bwt-uk.co.uk
Café 2U 0845 6444 708 www.cafe2u.co.uk
Caffeica 01993 776753 www.caffeica.co.uk
Cimbali 020 82387100 www.cimbaliuk.com
Clockwork Coffee 01753 548 009 www.clockwork-coffee.co.uk
Coffea Arabica 07766533157 www.coffeaarabica.co.uk
Coffee 1652 01744762919 www.coffee1652.co.uk
Coffee Care 01756 794 811 www.coffeecare.co.uk
Coffee Classics 0844 800 5387 www.coffeeclassics.co.uk
Coffee Origin Trips 07802 299054 www.coffeeorigintrips.com
Coffee Perfection +353 01 825 3981 coffeeperfection.ie
Coffeeman Devon 01803 873759 www.coffeemandevon.co.uk
CoffeTek 01275 844471 www.coffetek.co.uk
Coffix Ltd 01530 242800 www.coffix.com
Coffox Ltd T/A Cafesuccess www.cafesuccesshub.com
Complete Beverage Solutions 01635 877173 www.cbs-beverages.co.uk
Cornish Coffee (Miko) 01209 215555 www.cornishcoffee.co.uk
Edgcumbes 01243 555775 www.edgcumbes.co.uk
Espresso Services 0141 425 1083 www.espressoservices.co.uk
Espresso Solutions 01293 769825 www.espresso-solutions.co.uk
European WaterCare 01279 780268 www.watercare.co.uk
Farrer's 01539 720020 www.farrerscoffee.co.uk
Fracino 0121 328 5757 www.fracino.com
GMS Espresso 01494 484319 www.gmsespresso.com
H2O Direct 01892 669628 www.h2odirect.co.uk
Inglehurst Foods 01420 563 413 www.inglehurst.co.uk
Kimbo 0208 743 8959 www.kimbo.co.uk
Kokoa Collection 0208 8832660 www.kokoacollection.co.uk
LF Spare Parts Ltd 01285 861625 www.lfspareparts724.com
M*A*D Training Solutions 07768 884693 www.coffeetraining.co.uk
Miko 0800 496 39 39 www.miko.co.uk
Pentair Water Belgium +32 (0)14 283 504 www.pentairfoodservice.com
Plantation Coffee 01733 830875 www.plantationcoffee.co.uk
Pumphreys Coffee 0191 4144 510 www.pumphreys.co.uk
Qualitasse 01256 300050 www.qualitasse.co.uk
R.W Stokes 01522 512548 www.stokes-coffee.co.uk
Rainforest Alliance 00 31 20 422 8856 www.rainforest-alliance.org
RBC East Midlands www.rbcem.co.uk
Rcoffee 0161 448 9171 www.rcoffee.co.uk
Rhode Island Coffee 01204 702 338 www.rhodeislandcoffee.co.uk
Robert Mallerman www.spray-dryer.com
Speciality Tea Academy UK 07976517128 www.ukteaacademy.co.uk
 01283 712332 www.bartonmarina.co.uk
The Black & White Coffee Co 01205 460700 www.southlincsfoodservice.co.uk
The Brew Group 0845 450 0500 www.caffesociety.co.uk
The Coffee Cart Company 01432 278626 www.coffeecartcompany.co.uk
The London School of Coffee 0208 439 7981 www.londonschoolofcoffee.com
The Office Coffee Company 020 3763 4035 www.office-coffee.co.uk
The Proton Group 01924 892 834 www.proton-group.co.uk
Total Refreshment Solutions/Arumba 0131 448 0666 www.arumba-coffee.co.uk
Voyager Coffee 01364 644440 www.voyagercoffee.co.uk



The BSA Bulletin is an initiative by which the association presents to the trade items of current news which are thought to be of importance or interest to all of us working in this sector.

The reportage does not necessarily reflect the views of the board or the membership in general.

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