Coffee Basics Part II :- the Odd Coffee Drink by Heather Protz

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Coffee is the second most exported commodity in the world coming second only to petroleum. There are many legends and myths about the origin of the coffee berry. It is said that a young shepherd named Kaldi was the one who first discovered the coffee bean. Other folklores point towards the Middle East, specifically Yemen, where coffee was exported into India and subsequently spread to the rest of the world. Or so they say.

Unlike tea, coffee has a variety to it- there are different kinds of coffee beans, giving a wide range o flavors. Of these two, the most popular varieties of coffee are the Arabica and the Robusta. Arabica is considered the superior of all coffee beans because of its diversity in flavor. Evidently, Robusta has higher caffeine content. The taste of the coffee brewed from Robusta would range from neutral to acrid. Arabica, on the other hand, can taste anything between pleasantly sweet to bitter or tangy.

In the past, coffee was brewed using nothing more than Arabica. But coffee blends these days contain definite proportions of both Arabica and Robusta. The perfect espresso is made by adding the exact quantities of Arabica and Robusta. The thing is when Robusta is added to the Espresso blend, there is a distinctive, but largely favored change in the body and the flavor of the coffee. However, there exist Robusta beans that can provide a taste that is similar to the Arabica.

There are countless types of coffee each with a distinguished flavor. These differences, for the most part, arise from the way the coffee is brewed and not on the bean variety. It could be a French press, an Indian filter or an Espresso. The differences don't stop just there; coffee has plenty of ways in which it can be consumed.

During medieval times, when it was first brewed, the English liked their coffee laden with lard, mustard and allspice. Gratifyingly, coffee these days are so much more appetizing. Apart from the popular varieties of coffee drinks such as the mocha, the cappuccino etc., there are several coffee drinks around the world each unlike the rest. Here is a list of coffee drinks with a quirk.

The Affogato: This is a traditional Italian desert. Affogato literally means 'drowned' in Italian. It consists of jelly, or ice cream with a shot of espresso poured over it.

The Yuanyang: This drink was named after a pair of ducks. Yuanyang in Mandarin denotes a pair of inseparable Chinese ducks. The Hong Kong drink is made by mixing equal proportions of tea and coffee and can be served cold or hot.

The Guillermo: This is an interesting Portuguese drink made by pouring one or two shots of Espresso over lime slices, usually with or without sugar.

The Black Tie: Crushed star anise, tamarind, iced tea, sugar, sweetened condensed milk and two shots of Espresso. Mix all that together and you'll be holding one of Thailand's own in your hands.

The Mazagran: Another Portuguese invention, the Mazagran is a type of iced liqueur coffee. It consists of one or two shots of strong chilled espresso with brandy.

The Oliang: The Oliang or the oleng is a traditional Thai iced coffee. It is different from the black tie and has soy beans or corn and sesame seeds blended into it.

Ca phe sua da: A variant of the Thai iced coffee, this Vietnamese beverage is slowly trickling into

the hearts of many Americans. This coffee is made simply by deep roasting the coffee beans, brewing it by using a French press filter and pouring it over ice cubes. This coffee can be topped with milk or condensed milk.

Coffee is an excellent stimulant, keeps you fresh and has quite a few health benefits. At the same time, drinking gallons of coffee has some serious effects. The above are some of the many regional and popular coffee drinks. For more information regarding the non-classical versions of coffee, watch TLC on Time Warner TV.

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