

Coffee smells like freshly ground heaven

~ Jessi Lane Adam



It's coffee time

The coffee corner in Pick n Pay on Nicol has been a great promoter for local roastery, Been There. Fully trained baristas man the counter to share the story behind the bean and educate customers about the preparation and history of the coffee, as well as give out free samples.



So give your coffee sales a caffeine injection

BY LAURA DURHAM

Coffee. Most people wake up with it and most can't get through the day without it. Convenience stores may lead the way with the coffee-to-go but retailers are fast tapping in to customers' demands for good quality coffee at a reasonable price. Specialised offerings, in-house baristas, coffee shops in-store and the coffee-to-shop concept are some of the ways that retailers and suppliers are meeting this demand.

The perfect cup – what makes a good coffee?

Some like it strong, some like it filtered and some prefer it decaffeinated. Stuart Knott, senior brand manager at Jacobs Coffee emphasises the need for personal taste: "A coffee that you like the taste of is a 1 000 times better than an excellent quality (expensive) coffee roast that you cannot stand!"

Sophisticated coffee

Instant coffee may still be the most popular coffee category, but many consumers,

particularly amongst the higher LSMs, are turning to ground coffee, observes Sarah Robinson, one of the directors of Bean There.

This demand has been met by a number of international roasteries, such as Lavazza and Ciro, as well as local suppliers. Bean There is a roastery that has tapped in to the increasing demand on the local level. They can be found in the new flagship store, Pick n Pay on Nicol and the customer interest has "completely exceeded our expectations," says Robinson. Since the store opened two months ago, 500-600kgs of Wild Bean coffee have already been sold.

IT'S COFFEE TIME ►

The coffee corner, complete with a trained barista has done a lot to boost their presence in the local scene. The baristas are there to share the story behind the bean and educate customers about the preparation and history of the coffee, as well as give out free samples.

Robinson says that imported blends and beans dominate the shelves for the moment, as local roasteries seem to be concentrating more on the food-service sector. Local organic coffee is more readily available in fresh food markets or direct from the roastery over the internet. However, this is changing and retailers like Pick n Pay seem to be providing more of a platform for these suppliers.



The tea and coffee section is the perfect place to promote everything that goes with the hot beverages – coffee creamers, plungers and mugs. Cross-merchandising here will also give customers great gift ideas.

Merchandising is very important for coffee, like in all categories, but what suppliers and retailers need to get right is merchandising the shelves in such a way that customers can find what they are looking for. And of course, replenish popular lines regularly. "A simpler shelf with the best brands is better and less confusing than a huge range of poor coffee brands," says Robinson.

She feels that giving customers information and the history behind coffee, as well as a taste of the product, is the best way to market coffee. The aroma of coffee wafting through the store is also a sure way to bring customers to the coffee.

Coffee without the caffeine

Having a wide range of coffees, including decaffeinated variants is important

because customers need to feel that you care about them and go out of your way to accommodate their demands. Knott explains the decaffeination process for their new addition to the market, Jacobs Night and Day decaffeinated.

"Jacobs uses a process to decaffeinate our coffee to ensure there is minimal taste difference between caffeinated and decaffeinated coffee. We use a gas and water based method to remove the caffeine before the bean is roasted or processed into freeze dried instant coffee to ensure the flavour is not affected," he says. Their decaffeinated coffee is also specially roasted to taste milder as decaffeinated coffee drinkers tend to like a milder taste.

Fresh coffee in your store

In Knott's opinion, retailers generally are not getting the fresh coffee offering right. "They need to offer their coffee to meet their consumers needs – do they have a good on-the-go offering – with something like a built in cup holder for the shoppers trolley? Not all shoppers want to sit down and drink a cup of coffee as they are in a hurry."

Some retailers are making headway in this regard. For example, the newly opened Louis Botha Pick n Pay has introduced a very simple yet successful concept in the store: 'Coffee-to-shop'. As customers enter the store, they come across a Lavazza coffee counter where they can order a coffee (cappuccino, latté, espresso or latté infusion) and pay at the coffee till.

Customers are then free to enjoy the coffee at the counter or begin their shopping, cup in hand. Owner, Malcolm McKibbin, says that the concept of coffee and shopping is still very foreign to customers and a lot of

marketing needs to be done to promote this link. "Customers are surprised because they do not expect to be able to buy coffee and shop at the same time," he says. The decision to go with a well-known coffee brand like Lavazza is again a way to familiarise the customers with the concept. He says they are also plan to introduce 'buy one get one free' and combo deals to further promote the coffee corner. The potential to develop the 'coffee-to-shop' concept is huge because other than purchasing the equipment, it is not expensive for the retailer and it will do much to boost the customers' shopping experience in the store.

How to improve your coffee offering

In a retail environment (at the hot foods counter, bakery or in-store dining area) Jacob's Stuart Knott advises retailers to consider the following important elements:

- Staff training – key to creating the coffee shop experience.
- Barista certification – must be able to deliver awesome cappuccinos consistently.
- Quality of coffee – must be of an acceptable level but does not need to be gourmet rating as it will be inevitably be used in cappuccinos as a base.
- Quality of grinder – depends on the type of coffee and the type of coffee shop experience.
- Ensuring consistency – key, without this there is no point.
- Don't over complicate it – make sure you are expert at delivering cappuccinos that are light and frothy as this is what most consumers will be looking for in their coffee break.



Louis Botha Pick n Pay has introduced the 'coffee-to-shop' concept, which allows customers to enjoy a cup of coffee while they shop. A great idea!

