



Coffee talk

BY AMELIA LEVIN

Move your java service into the bold new world of crafted brews.

Just when you thought coffee couldn't get any more complicated, urban hipsters and other java aficionados are propelling the coffeehouse scene into its "Third Wave," a movement that's gaining momentum as more consumers seek out craft coffee brews much as they do with beer and wine.

"We define the 'Third Wave' coffee movement as elevating coffee to an artisan product similar to a fine wine—you may even see tasting notes on menus, like blackberry or citrus," says Mike Kostyo, senior publications manager at Datassential, a Chicago-based menu research firm. "The Third Wave focuses on growing conditions; carefully sourced beans, with terms like single-estate; a near-obsessive focus on roasting, with concepts like small-batch roasting and air roasting; and a huge variety of brewing methods dedicated to each bean variety, from pour-overs to siphons to high-tech machines."

Inspired java trends

Some also call it the refinement of the Second Wave coffee movement, which was dominated by Starbucks with its many milk-based, syrup-infused specialty coffee drinks. Now, however, coffee consumption has become more about the quality of the beans and the craftsmanship of the roasting, meant to bring out the natural "terroir" of the beans and other nuanced flavors. That leaves less room for those syrups and vanilla- or hazelnut-flavored beans in the coffee arena and more room for locally roasted, single-origin beans sourced from sustainable growers.

"We are still seeing many of the trends that have been growing in recent years, like pour-over coffee, specialty blends, alternative, nondairy milks, and small-batch roasting, but now on-trend operators and manufacturers are taking it one step further," says Kostyo. "We are even seeing a number of coffee trends that are inspired by the craft cocktail movement—nitro coffees and lattes that are often described as the 'Guinness' of coffee, self-serve coffee taps and growlers, coffee aged in bourbon barrels, coffee mocktails mixed with house infusions and bitters."

Other trends include inspiration from around the world, with Vietnamese coffee and Thai iced coffee growing in popularity, he adds. →



Expanding coffee options

To compete in this increasingly competitive coffee marketplace, one that quick-serves and convenience stores are taking seriously, grocerants will need to step up their game, say industry observers. “As hot and iced specialty coffees are primarily purchased away from home, supermarkets can help bridge that gap by offering specialty options that consumers can take home or even enjoy in the store,” Kostyo says.

Many of the most on-trend new coffee products and prep methods don’t require high-end equipment or even that much more labor, just an awareness of what to do and how to do it. (See related story below.) Some grocerants, for example, have installed self-serve iced coffee or latte taps where consumers can fill up a coffee growler, or “bean bars” with specialty roasts or maybe even house-roasted beans, allowing the smell of freshly roasting coffee to waft through the store.

“These in-store coffee bars are an even better fit than

a wine bar because they offer an all-day option that consumers can carry with them as they shop,” Kostyo says. “They also don’t require a large space or monetary investment—a small coffee kiosk can still offer a wide range of options.”

He points to the coffee program at San Antonio-based H-E-B Central Market, with its bulk barrels of coffee made from house-roasted beans, pour-over bars, and “Know Your Joe” coffee events featuring coffee growers and farmers.

Cleveland-based Heinen’s supermarkets carry fair trade beans, which are also roasted in-house. At Heinen’s Equal Exchange coffee bars, coffee roasters and baristas often chat with customers about roasting, blending and brewing.



Zingerman’s also sells its cold-brew coffee in bottles.

Trending now: A coffee brewing primer



Pour-over

The pour-over method requires a cone, ground coffee beans, hot water and a separate carafe or vessel to catch the extracted coffee, explains Steve Mangigian, co-managing partner at Zingerman’s Coffee Co. in Ann Arbor, Mich. Any basic plastic cone can be used with a paper filter and a glass carafe or coffee mug to catch the extraction, as hot water is

poured from a tea kettle-like container in circular motions over the grounds.

A Chemex brand pour-over combines the “cone” part and the extraction vessel in one integrated unit fitted with a filter. “This method uses a thicker filter that helps filter out a little more sediment than a traditional pour-over,” says Mangigian.



Siphon

Heat is applied from a butane burner or other source to a glass bowl of filtered water, and the heated water moves via a tube to an upper chamber that contains the coffee grounds. The extracted coffee then travels back down through a filter into

the lower chamber.

The flavor and consistency tend to run “thicker” than a pour-over, but more thinned out than a French press. “People love the siphon method for its ‘live theater’ experience,” says Mangigian. “However, it requires a fair bit of expertise to produce correctly.”



French press

This classic coffee brewing method, like the pour-over, requires no heat hook-ups, only hot water. Coffee grounds and hot water are mixed in a glass container with a spout, steeped for several minutes, and then the stainless steel filter is pressed from the top down to the bottom to extract the coffee, which can be poured into cups.


“With French press, you get more of that sediment, which leads to a richer, thicker consistency,” says Mangigian.



Aero press

Courtesy of the inventor of the Frisbee, this branded coffee brewing method is extremely mobile and portable, so space-constrained caterers or retailers with access to a hot water source often prefer it. Hot water and coffee are combined in a lower chamber, while a top chamber is fitted with a rubber seal to pressurize the cylindrical vessel and

And Zingerman's Coffee Co. in Ann Arbor, Mich., has partnered with grocerants and retailers across the Midwest to provide specialty coffee shop quality and atmosphere, with a chalkboard menu to detail all the different preparation methods for coffee brewing.

"I believe that coffee is a warm and welcoming beverage, and it ought to be approachable and accessible," says Steven Mangigian, Zingerman's co-managing partner. "I shouldn't be the one to dictate to you what you should be drinking; rather, I want to offer customers as many coffee options as I can to help them develop their own preferences." 

3 quick ways to upgrade in-store coffee service

1. Expand the coffee menu

Consider broadening the coffee program beyond just drip and/or espresso with a pour-over, French press, cold-brewed or other "manual" coffee brewing method requiring no additional equipment or space except for a hot water source. Research shows consumers are looking for more coffee options, and prices for these kinds of brews generally run higher, for more profit potential.

2. Seek out higher-quality coffee beans

Focusing on the best quality beans possible is important for competing in the current coffee space. Consider single origin or blended beans from sustainable, fair trade sources and roasted by specialty or even local specialty roasters.

3. Offer customization with add-ins

If space, labor and cost constraints put specialty and espresso drinks out of reach, it's still possible to provide the customized experience that consumers seek. Try using a wider variety of milks, including nondairy options like soy, almond and coconut, as well as more sweetener choices such as all-natural, minimally processed raw sugar, honey, agave syrup or even coconut sugar and Splenda for low- or noncaloric drinks.

extract the coffee.

"Some call this a poor-man's espresso because you're also using pressure to extract the coffee [but] without all the heavy equipment," says Mangigian. "It's relatively easy to teach staff how to brew with this method."

Drip

The most classic machine-based coffee brewing method, drip coffee essentially uses a pour-over technique. Water is heated up and released over ground beans in a filter that extracts the coffee into a pot, carafe or other vessel, which is either insulated or set atop a heat source to maintain temperature.

"With drip, it's important to use a good machine and choose the best quality beans wisely, and to make the coffee in batches so it's fresh and not sitting too long," says Mangigian.

Some newer, state-of-the-art drip brewer models have digital control boards that allow users to program their own coffee "recipes."

Espresso

Many Third Wave coffee shops favor imported Italian or Italian-like espresso machines that are manually driven, so a barista can control the extraction and flavor. Fresh, finely ground coffee beans are placed in a portafilter and tamped before being hooked into the machine and pressurized with



hot water to extract the coffee into a "shot."

Mangigian says there are currently two schools of thought when it comes to espresso preparation. Pressure profiling focuses on adjusting the pressure knob to use different pressure variations that extract different characteristics of

the coffee. The other school of thought focuses on changing the temperature of the water passing through the grounds to produce different characteristics. Most Italian-made machines do one or the other, but automated espresso machines offer little to no control over the pressure or temperature settings.

Cold-brewed coffee

The smoother, slightly sweeter taste of cold-brewed coffee is growing in popularity, led by Third Wave coffee shops and now even Starbucks.

It requires little equipment but does involve added labor and staff oversight. Filtered, room temperature water is blended with freshly ground coffee beans and steeped for 12 to 24 hours, then filtered out. The resulting concentrate can be diluted with additional filtered water and/or served over ice.

