

## **Spare Me Your Patronising Latte Language**

*Once my mother noted that if coffee were to run out in Denmark the nation would close down. She had a point as Scandinavians consume almost 10 kilos of coffee per capita annually, compared with the global 3 kilo average.*

## **The Coffee War**

London's contemporary coffee culture started not so long ago with a few joints, which also served tea. Then there was a chain reaction; Coffee Republic, Costa and Starbucks. We were witnessing the outbreak of an urban coffee war. Global giants were fighting with local businesses for 'café hot-spots'. In trendy Primrose Hill, one of London's small local villages, residents demonstrated against a Starbucks opening. They didn't want their local village polluted by a café without soul.

## **Claiming the Coffee Culture**

One thing is for sure: the Americans didn't invent coffee culture, despite acting as if it's their original creation. On a recent trip to Vienna I spotted a beautiful historic building with a huge sign reading: *'Don't worry – Starbucks will open soon bringing the café culture to Vienna'*. My reaction was astonishment: Are you guys serious? It made me wonder, where the thin line between downright ignorance and complete self-obsession falls.

## **The Real Thing**

Over the years I have travelled the world's café metropolises. After my first café au lait in Paris in the early '80s I was sold. In Italy, where coffee making is a sacred art, I later enjoyed soulful social encounters with espresso-, cappuccino- and latte-drinking. Eventually I discovered the tradition of the Viennese, whose first coffee house – and the first outside the Ottoman Empire – opened in 1645. Arabs and Persians got there long before that, drinking coffee in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Pseudo Coffee Religion**

We are officially in the 'latte age'. Ritual latte drinking is an obsession and coffee is our new religion. Even the British have moved from fanatical tea drinking to a mad 'latte-on-the-go' culture; now rating 49th with a 2.2 kg global coffee consumption per capita. The new coffee concepts invented are branded as unique experiences – but accompanied by a patronising coffee language that frustrates anyone in a hurry. Honestly - get a life! Who cares about a stupid new coffee term when the 'real experience' is lost in translation and the coffee itself is a fluffy foam confection, bearing few or no traces of Arabica beans or (come to that) authenticity. Serve me a cup of good strong black coffee anytime and I will be happy.

Appendix: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_coffee\\_consumption\\_per\\_capita](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_coffee_consumption_per_capita)

1. Finland 11.4 kg
2. Aruba 9.2 kg
3. Iceland 9.1 kg
4. Norway 9 kg
5. Denmark 8.1 kg
6. Sweden 7.9 kg
7. Bermuda 7.5 kg
8. Switzerland 7.4 kg
9. Netherlands 6.8 kg
10. Germany 6.6 kg