

Now that's a Good Cup of Coffee

by John Rizzo

I had the pleasure of touring a coffee processing plant owned by Sara Lee (although recently sold to Smucker's) about a year ago. I have to tell you; they take their coffee very seriously. This particular plant actually produced a highly concentrated liquid coffee that is frozen in cardboard containers designed for high tech dispensing machines for food service. We were able watch the process as the coffee turned into a thick slurry through heat reduction. My intention isn't to discuss the process of making liquid coffee, but I do want to mention that 100% of the energy used to reduce thousands of gallons of coffee into a few hundred, was created by burning the coffee grounds. It was an inferno; like being just feet from the surface of the sun.

While I was there I had the opportunity to participate in "cupping" coffee with the experts. If you have never witnessed this, it's really a unique experience. Ultimately you are comparing several blends of coffee. All the coffee was ground at the time of the cupping while the grains and water were precisely measured. The coffee was brewed, poured identically, steeped for several minutes and maintained at the same temperature. First, the coffee was briskly inhaled to test the aroma for adjectives like herbal, nutty, floral and fruity. Next was the big slurp. Yes, slurping; exactly what it sounds like. They quickly sucked in the coffee while their infantile sounds came pouring out. I have to admit, it was a bit startling the first time I heard it. This is to spray the coffee evenly across the tongue to identify the distinct flavors of the coffee. The tongue is broken down into four taste regions. The tip of the tongue is sweet, the sides are sour and salty while the back is bitter. Now that the taster has doused his mouth with coffee, he proceeds to spit it out into an upscale spittoon. The taster can now make an evaluation of the coffee's flavor, acidity, aroma, bitterness, sweetness, body and aftertaste. They were tasting flavors, or at least telling us they were, that I could not detect.

So what was the outcome? The bottom line is that all the coffee had distinctive flavors. Many were very similar in my opinion, and none were classified as a bad cup.

Conclusion: A good cup of coffee is what is most appealing and satisfying to you and only you.

Tiramisu Bread

Yield: 1 Loaf

Batter:

Strong Coffee*	1/4 Cup	Sour Cream	1/4 cup
Flour	1 1/2 Cup	Butter, room temp	1/2 Cup
Salt	1/4 tsp.	Sugar	1 Cup
Baking Powder	2 tsp.	Eggs	2
Vanilla Extract	1 tsp.		

Cream Cheese Filling:

Sugar	2 TBL	Vanilla Extract	1/2 tsp.
Eggs	1	Chocolate Morsels,	1/2 Cup
Cream Cheese, soft	3/4 Cup	semisweet	

Cream Cheese Filling: Melt the chocolate in a double boiler (stainless bowl over top of simmering water). Remove from heat and set aside.

With an electric mixer, beat the cream cheese, sugar, vanilla and eggs for approximately 4 minutes or until well blended.

Scrape down the bowl and add the melted chocolate; mix for an additional 2 minutes and set aside.

Batter: Combine the flour, baking powder and salt, mix well and set aside. In a small bowl, whisk together the sour cream, strong coffee (*on low heat, reduce 1 Cup of coffee to 1/4 cup) and vanilla.

With an electric mixer, beat the butter and sugar until well blended. Add the eggs one at a time while continuing to whip until light and fluffy.

Slowly add the dry flour mixture and the coffee mixture (a little of each until all is incorporated. Mix well, but do not over mix.

In a greased and floured 9 x 5 x 3 loaf pan, pour in half the batter.

Take the cream cheese filling and gently place half of it on top of the batter. Pour the remaining batter over the cream cheese filling. Spread the remaining cream cheese filling on top of the batter. Bake at 325° F for approximately one hour or until an inserted tooth pick pulls out clean. Let the quick bread cool for at least one hour before cutting.