

But First...Coffee: Gotcha Latte in Gillespie Celebrates 4th Anniversary

by Tara Cale

September 19 2022 1:00 AM





GILLESPIE - I know there are massive numbers of coffee drinkers in the world. After crude oil, coffee is the most sought commodity in the world. My parents are coffee drinkers. They start - and end- each day with coffee. They drink it with breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert... or just because. And they drink it black.

According to the website for Gotcha Latte Cafe in Gillespie, no one knows exactly how or when coffee was discovered, though there are many legends about its origin. Coffee grown worldwide can trace its heritage back centuries to the ancient coffee forests on the Ethiopian plateau. Legend says the goat herder Kaldi first discovered the potential of these beloved beans when he noticed that after eating the berries from a certain tree, his goats became so energetic that they did not want to sleep at night. Kaldi reported his findings to the abbot of the local monastery, who made a drink with the berries and found that it kept him alert through the long hours of evening prayer. The abbot shared his discovery with the other monks at the monastery, and knowledge of the energizing berries began to spread. As word moved east and coffee reached the Arabian peninsula, it began a journey that would bring these beans across the globe.

By the 15th century, coffee was being grown in the Yemeni district of Arabia and by the 16th century, it was known in Persia, Egypt, Syria, and Turkey. Coffee was not only enjoyed in homes, but also in the many public coffee houses. The popularity of the coffee houses was unequaled and people frequented them for all kinds of social activities. Not only did the patrons drink coffee and engage in conversation, but they also listened to music, watched performers, played chess, and kept current on the news. Coffee houses quickly became such an important center for the exchange of information that they were often referred to as “Schools of the Wise.”

European travelers to the Near East brought back stories of an unusual dark black beverage. By the 17th century, coffee had made its way to Europe and was becoming popular across the continent. Some people reacted to this new beverage with suspicion or fear, calling it the “bitter invention of Satan.” The local clergy condemned coffee when it came to Venice in 1615. The controversy was so great that Pope Clement VIII was asked to intervene. He decided to taste the beverage for himself before making a decision and found the drink so satisfying that he gave it papal approval.

Despite such controversy, coffee houses were quickly becoming centers of social activity and communication in the major cities of England, Austria, France, Germany, and Holland. In England “penny universities” sprang up, so called because for the price of a penny one could purchase a cup of coffee and engage in stimulating conversation. Coffee began to replace the common breakfast drink beverages of the time — beer and wine. Those who drank coffee instead of alcohol began the day alert and energized, and not surprisingly, the quality of their work was greatly improved. Fast forward (and skipping quite a bit of the history of coffee)...



In 1714, the Mayor of Amsterdam presented a gift of a young coffee plant to King Louis XIV of France. The King ordered it to be planted in the Royal Botanical Garden in Paris. In 1723, a young naval officer, Gabriel de Clieu obtained a seedling from the King's plant. Despite a challenging voyage — complete with horrendous weather, a saboteur who tried to destroy the seedling, and a pirate attack — he managed to transport it safely to Martinique. Once planted, the seedling not only thrived but it's credited with the spread of over 18 million coffee trees on the island of Martinique in the next 50 years. Even more incredible is that this seedling was the parent of all coffee trees throughout the Caribbean, South, and Central America.

The famed Brazilian coffee owes its existence to Francisco de Mello Palheta, who was sent by the emperor to French Guiana to get coffee seedlings. The French were not willing to share, but the French Governor's wife, captivated by his good looks, gave him a large bouquet of flowers before he left— buried inside were enough coffee seeds to begin what is today a billion-dollar industry.

Missionaries and travelers, traders, and colonists continued to carry coffee seeds to new lands, and coffee trees were planted worldwide. Plantations were established in magnificent tropical forests and on rugged mountain highlands. Some crops flourished,

while others were short-lived. New nations were established on coffee economies. Fortunes were made and lost. By the end of the 18th century, coffee had become one of the world's most profitable export crops. And if you are a coffee drinker... you get that.

Personally, I cannot drink coffee. I have a type of “allergic” reaction that makes me have seizures when I drink it. Doctors say it is because of the high level of caffeine that somehow depletes my blood of adequate sugar levels. But that is neither here nor there, except to say that I know nothing of espresso, cappuccino, latte, etc. Kim Henderson, owner of Gotcha Latte Cafe in Gillespie, graciously filled me in. Espresso is a concentrated form of coffee served in small, strong shots and is the base for many coffee drinks. It's made from the same beans as coffee but is stronger, thicker, and higher in caffeine. However, because espresso is typically served in smaller servings than coffee, it has less caffeine per serving. Milk or cream is never poured into espresso (except when making other drinks, which are no longer called "espresso"), although espresso can be sweetened with sugar if desired.



Cappuccino and Latte are drinks made with espresso and milk. The distinction is that in cappuccino, the milk is "frothed" (using the steam wand that is part of any espresso machine) into a "microfoam" that is about twice the volume of the original milk. In a

latte, the milk is merely "steamed" (heated, with the result being hot milk with a small head of froth) using the same steam wand, but a different technique. For frothing, the milk is converted to a "microfoam." The microbubbles in the foam are formed by forcing hot air into the tightly-knit "fabric" created by the protein molecules in milk. So ironically, skim milk, being higher in protein, will produce a more voluminous foam than whole milk. For a latte, the goal is not to create that much foam, so any type of milk works. For cappuccino, you start with equal portions of espresso and milk. The milk is then "frothed" (in a special frothing pitcher) into a microfoam that is roughly double the original volume of the milk. The microfoam is then poured over the espresso. (If the espresso is poured into the microfoam, then the drink is called a "latte macchiato.") For a latte, you start with twice as much milk as espresso. The milk is then heated (but not frothed) to 150-160 degrees Fahrenheit (but not hotter) using the steam wand. The hot milk and espresso are then poured together into a serving cup. Whatever microfoam had formed in the steaming process is poured over the top of the latte. Sometimes, the foam is poured artistically to create fancy designs on top of the drink. Optionally, powdered or shaved chocolate and/or cinnamon can be sprinkled on top of either drink. This is a matter of personal taste.

And then you also have the Frappe. A frappé is an iced beverage that has been shaken, blended, or beaten to produce a tasty, foamy, and refreshing drink. It is served cold, often with whipped cream and toppings. You can add ice before or after beating the coffee and custom additives such as sugar, milk, vanilla, and sweet sauces. It depends on what you are shaking or blending it in: a shaker, frappé maker, or blender. An ice-crushing blender is better than a shaker for blending a frappé. A frappé is traditionally made with coffee, but you can make other flavorful frappé drinks with teas, juices, or hot chocolate; the possibilities are endless. There are many different variations of this popular blended icy drink. The word frappé comes from the French verb frapper which means to slap, knock, or beat.

Here is a simpler breakdown:

Latte: pour espresso shot first, add steamed milk with syrup (little frothiness on top)

Cappuccino: pour espresso shot first, add frothy steamed milk with syrup (lots of frothiness)

Macchiato: pour frothy steamed milk with syrup first, add steamed milk (froth on bottom)

Iced Drinks: put ice in cup, add syrup and espresso, and stir (no frothing) Frappuccino: 1 /2 ice, 1/2 milk, syrup, espresso, then blend (add whipped topping)

Gotcha Latte has some “house specials” including Americano - espresso and hot water; Red Eye - 1 shot espresso and coffee; Black Eye- 2 shots espresso and coffee; Dead Eye - 3 shots espresso and coffee.

It's all a bit too confusing to me, and I still don't get it, but I understand I am a minority in that respect. Coffee lovers will get it!



When Kim Henderson and her husband Mark first bought the historic building in Gillespie, they had no inclination for it to be anything other than a storefront for Mark’s business, Gotcha Computers. But Kim is a sixth-grade English/Language Arts teacher

who is very in tune with her students and the community. She felt that the community needed a place for not only kids, but everyone, to gather, relax, hang out and socialize. It was always in the back of her mind to create this atmosphere - and with the purchase of a building that was much too large for just a computer business - the opportunity was literally dropped in her lap. Kim and Mark decided to push forward with Kim's vision. A place where a group of friends could gather for morning coffee. Where teens, families, and others could congregate to play games, display their musical skills, access the internet, or just relax and unwind. "We actually bought the building in 2017," Kim explained, "But it needed some updating. We preserved some of the unique highlights of the building - like the original woodwork and old tin ceilings - but it needed some paint and polish."

Gotcha Latte Cafe opened in September 2018, making this month its four-year anniversary.

"We envisioned a safe and enjoyable setting for people to get together, and I think we have created that," she added. There is no charge to use the space for gathering, gaming, etc, though the business would appreciate a purchase. And though the space is large, there are many various sized seating arrangements to access - from a table to a large group in the center, to the more intimate two chairs settings, including some in cozy window alcoves. "We have many groups that come in on a regular basis, including a Thursday morning coffee group," Kim said. "Friday nights are when the teens come in and they may play board games, computer games, or sing karaoke on our system. We have a group of Dungeons and Dragons players ...there is literally something for everyone."

Kim added that she loves when the different generations come together at Gotcha Latte Cafe.

"We have had teens in here playing their instruments, and adults will join them with their instruments and have a mini jam session."

Having a group of unsupervised teens may cause some concern to some business owners, but Kim said for the most part, everyone that comes in is courteous, well-behaved, and respectful. "There have been a few rare instances where we had to ask a young person to leave and not come back," she noted, "And trust me, I'm not afraid to call Mom!"

Anyone 12 or over can come in without adult accompaniment. Those younger are welcome, but will need a parent or guardian to stay with them. In addition to the plethora of coffee and soft drinks offered ... they have over 30 flavors of coffee drinks... they also offer soda, water, teas, energy drinks, hot chocolate and ... real fruit smoothies,

and even Frappe slushies with no espresso!... Gotcha Latte also has pastries from the well-known local B&K Bakery in Mt. Olive. They make sandwiches on “Good Bread” from B&K (if you have not had “Good Bread” you don’t know what you are missing!), and offer a variety of wraps. Sandwiches and wraps pack an impressive 1/2 lb of quality meats from Fema’s and are just \$4.99 each. They are made fresh daily, so when they are gone, that’s it for the day. Packaged chips, nachos and seasonal soups, chili and chili dogs, and other culinary delights are available including delicious options from The Ice Cream Factory!

If you live in the Gillespie area and haven’t already checked out Gotcha Latte, you really must. Come and enjoy some quality time with your kids or grandkids, family, or friends. Play one of the many board games they have on hand, or bring your own. Try their amazing selection of coffee drinks or try a fruit smoothie. Supporting small businesses like Gotcha Latte that offer much more than just a product and service will ensure they stick around supporting their local community. If you don’t live in the area, stop by for a latte as you travel through, or make it a destination for a day or weekend road trip.

And don’t forget about Gotcha Computers for everything related to computers. Mark Henderson offers 35 years of experience and a passion for solving problems. He offers fast and reasonably priced sales, repair, recycling, programming, software, networks, websites, set up and installation, and custom solutions. Gotcha Computers can repair all brands of desktops and laptops, support data back up and recovery, help with virus and spyware removal, tune-up or clean your system and so much more. He is located inside Gotcha Latte Cafe but can also be reached directly at mark@gotchacomputers.com, 217-710-0864, on Facebook, or at gotchacomputers.com.

Gotcha Latte is located at 102 Macoupin Street in Gillespie. Hours are Tuesday-Friday from 7 am-1 pm, and 3:30-7:30 pm, and Saturday-Sunday, 7 am-1 pm. Find out more by calling 217-839-5016, find them on Facebook, or visit www.gotchalatte.com.

This story originally printed in the September issue of The Prairie Land Buzz Magazine. Read more at <http://www.thebuzzmonthly.com>