



TEA
or



COFFEE:
the choice
is yours

There is a subtle war going on worldwide, as coffeehouses signal the arrival of globalisation, not just in Britain, where the average coffeehouse chain is Italian, but also in traditionally tea-drinking nations such as China, India and Thailand. Glass Style compares the two hot beverage contenders.

BY SADIE BRIGGS

Coffee, a perfect morning lift, served by Bormioli Rocco



ITALIAN INSPIRATION

The average Italian cannot be expected to fully regain consciousness in the morning, without first hearing the welcome efforts of the percolator filtering water up through the rich, dark grains to produce that most wonderful of aromas; fresh coffee. More spluttering noises bring milk to a heated, frothy high for the gorgeously creamy Cappuccino, (so called because its colour is that of the robes of the Capuchin monk's habit) sprinkled with chocolate powder. Italian barmen can design this cocoa into the pretty frothy forms of hearts if you smile nicely, for Italy knows its coffee. The Italians also scorn British, American and German methods of drinking 'brown water', (as they refer to diluted coffee in a mug, often instant). The French drink coffee at breakfast from a bowl (at home), between dipping in croissant or baguette. Turkish coffee is thick with the grains left in to sink to the bottom of the cup and increase the flavour. The Greeks get through long, hot afternoons of backgammon with equally long, thick, iced café frappe, the froth of which is so thick the straw it is drunk from stays upright alone in the tall glass.

THE CHINESE CONNECTION

Many say the best coffee comes from Brazil and Arabia. Now however, marketing sectors are trying to introduce it to the rapidly developing nation of China, where the potential for sales is enormous. There are inevitably hurdles to overcome as China is a traditionally tea drinking culture, where coffee is a mere fashion statement out of the budget range of the average Chinese worker. Yet as the Chinese move closer to the global market, coffee consumption is apparently growing rapidly. Coffee house chains such as American Starbucks, which has already opened over 90 coffee shops in China, are on the rise.

CONSUMER CHOICES

According to Euromonitor, the coffee culture is more likely to be accepted in Asian countries by affluent consumers with a high degree of Western influence, such as Japan. Following western culture and Americanisation to a great extent in its wealthy urban

Snack by Leonardo brings the comfort of coffee home with completely modern designs



culture, Japan actually has a far higher coffee consumption than Britain. Japan's 1.4 kg per capita and Singapore's 1.9 kg per capita are higher than the UK's 1.2 kg per capita, which is itself almost double the world's average at 0.7 kg. China is already rising above this.

CAFÉ CITY CHIC

Fashion helps and even in Europe where coffee is part of the daily routine, the coffee shop has always had the aura of an intellectual, sophisticated place to be, especially in Amsterdam, where they are places for



IVV: coloured, textured glass set adding warmth to tea parties

the legal smoking of light drugs. Drinking coffee is seen by the Chinese as a very Western habit and thus chic and cosmopolitan, hinting at the individuality, wealth, open-mindedness and liberal lifestyles they imagine those in the west, as seen via TV, cinema and advertising, to be living. It is thus concentrated in cities and especially among the professional classes. Increasingly ex-pats or those returning from study or work abroad, import these foreign cultures into China.

COOL COFFEE MAKERS

As coffee consumption grows in China, so will the demand for the essential equipment with which to make and drink this ancient and mysterious dark liquid. Western countries have lately fallen even more in love with Italian style as regards the look of the coffee culture.

Stainless steel percolators are favoured for making coffee, as part of tradition in Italy and France. The drip coffeemaker results in a lower caffeine content and is used more commonly in America and northern Europe. Drip coffeemakers can be in glass within a stainless steel frame, with plastic or stainless steel lid and handle, in classically simple, utilitarian designs which do not age. The 1958 Bodum Chambord coffee maker seems modern even today. In 1915 a glass design revolution took place as the Corning Glass Works invented heat-proof Pyrex, so making it possible to make glass-handled tea and coffee pots. Glass is ideal as the anticipation of watching the liquid coffee draining through can add to the experience. Coffee is also increasingly served in glass cups or mugs as there is a certain pleasure in seeing the its colours and froth through glass.

COFFEE CULTURE

It is evident just how seriously the Italians take their coffee culture, from



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the confusing number of variations on the theme. The most common, caffè or espresso, is a small cup of very strong coffee, caffè Americano is an espresso in a large cup with hot water aside to add, caffè freddo is iced coffee but not with actual ice-cubes as in Greek frappe, granitadi di caffè con panna is a delicious summer iced coffee with whipped cream and caffè corretto is coffee "corrected" with a shot of grappa, cognac, or other spirit to be drunk in cold mountain refuges or after a meal. Caffè Hag is of course decaffeinated coffee, caffè latte is hot milk mixed with coffee and served in a glass for breakfast, caffè macchiato is espresso "stained" with a drop of steamed milk, a small version of a

finally, the favourite outside Italy, is cappuccino itself, an espresso infused with steamed milk and drunk in the morning, but never, ever after lunch or dinner. Each of course has its special cup or glass.

THE ZEN ALTERNATIVE

In tea-drinking China, coffee is associated with lifestyle and fashion, whereas tea is associated with health. Tea has to be the answer to all catastrophe in the British culture. Its origins lie in

China, with Chinese references to tea found in the years before Christ. This plus close ties with the Zen Buddhist culture of Japan, mean that tea has long been associated with health, purifying of the body and well-being. Now, it is fashionable to drink many different types of herbal fusions, such as purifying green tea or camomile, to induce relaxation and sleep. Healthy infusions are usually poured into glass mugs, as the clear transparency of the material reflects the purifying qualities of the drink, for the body. Present global fashions for light, space, transparency and an air of intellectual chic, also encourage the serving of tea in delicate glass in modern

Paşabahçe range of tough
glass tea-cups



Pyrex made glass-handled teapots possible



coffeehouses. With the rise of sushi bars and new-age and ethnic fashions for a Zen inspired lifestyle, modern tea sets influenced by the chic simplicity of Japanese design have become highly popular for tisane. Of course, in established cafés, the traditional china cup and saucer have not been forgotten.

THE COMPLETE TEA SERVICE

Traditionally, the complete tea service was used by the European and of course British aristocracy and was usually presented on a silver tray. The most elegant teapots of the 1700's were produced in silver with elaborate designs. Sugar bowls and milk jugs were also often in silver. In Russia around 1618, when Czar Alexis was presented with chests of tea by the Chinese embassy in Moscow, tea was even then drunk out of glasses in silver holders.

Also in Turkey today for example, black tea as the national hot drink, is not drunk from porcelain cups or mugs but from glass cups. The two types of tea are the strong "koyu cay" and the light "acik cay". Although artificial, tourists are usually given "elma cayi", an apple tea. Instead of Amsterdam's coffee shops, there are various places in Istanbul where you can drink tea and smoke a narghile (water pipe). The narghile set is made of a ceramic or glass jar fitted with a handle and a pipe, containing water, to accompany the teapot.



Tea's Zen association enhanced by a warming candle, by Jenaer Glas

In Britain, the traditional tea service also looks back to the days of Indian Colonialism and many teas still come from India. Names such as Ceylon, Assam and Darjeeling leave no doubts about these teas' origins. Tea in India, known as chai, is served hot and sweet, with or without boiled milk, in metal cups with a double inside, so that the tea will not heat the outer part.

TEAPOTS: TREND OR TRADITION?

Teapots, which have returned as a cult household symbol, come in an many forms, decoration and materials. Through the years they have consisted of variations of porcelain, ceramic, clay, silver, pewter and other materials including glass.

Bodum's 1992 Assam tea maker is a glass teapot the design of which is pure simplicity with no unnecessary decoration. A glass sphere like a goldfish bowl, with lid and handle in another material. Transparency allows the rich colour of the tealeaves or less cultured teabags, to be seen slowly diffusing into the water.

The choice between tea and coffee has always been a dilemma for the British, many of whom can interchange them quite happily at any hour of the day. In southern European countries tea is drunk between meals, almost always without milk and with a slice of lemon. But however it is taken, the Zen cultures of its origins have ensured that tea is once again a chic and intelligent drink, still

able to challenge the coffee crowd on a global scale.



Wide gold bands are making a comeback even for tea time