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# Coffeehouses Where the Brew Is as Crucial as the Bean

By SUSAN M. NOVICK MARCH 28, 2015

On a recent Saturday afternoon, Jenna Martiello, 20, sipped a cup of coffee and admired the nearly six-foot tall roaster occupying center stage at Gentle Brew Coffee, a little coffeehouse in Long Beach. The stainless steel roaster with blue enamel accents was as shiny as a new car parked in a living room, surrounded by cafe tables, chairs and several armchairs.

“It’s intriguing,” Ms. Martiello said, “and you’re curious as to what the coffee is going to taste like.” Raising her cup, she described the Colombian-Brazilian blend inside as “robust and kind of dark, way better than the usual cup of coffee.”

Bryan Baquet, 27, a co-owner of Gentle Brew, hoped the display would draw attention to the entire coffee-making process. “We decided to put the roaster in the front to showcase what we do because people don’t realize we roast all of our own coffee on site,” said Mr. Baquet, who started the business as a part-time roaster in Hicksville in 2010 and moved to Long Beach two years ago, expanding offerings to include espresso and cappuccino drinks, alternative brews, in-house baked goods and weekend waffle breakfasts.

Like several new coffee roasteries on Long Island, Mr. Baquet’s cafe has become a hub in the artisanal coffee movement, often characterized as the third wave of coffee culture. As Jason Belkin, 40, the owner of Hampton Coffee Company tells it, the first wave of branded supermarket coffee led to a second wave of coffeehouse caramel macchiatos. Now, the third wave, which originated on the West Coast about 15 years ago, emphasizes the brew as much as the bean.

A third wave coffee experience like that at Gentle Brew, the Hampton Coffee Company, and Roast Coffee and Tea Trading Company in Patchogue, begins with a selection of high quality beans (often fair trade, single origin or organic), which are

treated to a precision in-house roasting, and then are ground to order.

What comes next, the brewing method, makes all the difference in flavor. In addition to using traditional auto drip machines, artisanal coffeehouses are using other devices and techniques that can refine a brew's taste. "The alternative brews are a little intimidating to some first-timers but they extract more flavor and really develop the coffee more intensely," said Angelica O'Shea, a barista at Gentle Brew.

The most popular alternative method is the manual pour-over, often using a Chemex, an hourglass flask with a paper filter, over which hot water is poured through a swan-necked kettle and swirled over coffee grounds. The resulting brew, strong and full-bodied, is captured in the bottom part of the glass beaker.

The cold brew method at Gentle Brew — methods vary from one place to another — steeps coarsely ground coffee in cool water for 24 hours and then filters out the grinds, resulting in a coffee concentrate that produces a robust iced coffee with little bitterness or acid.

In perhaps the most scientifically satisfying brewing process, vacuum pots, also known as siphons, resemble a retro chemistry experiment, using open flame burners or halogen lights to heat water in a glass beaker until it boils. The water rises up into a connective glass flask above that is outfitted with a filter and freshly ground coffee. This creates a vacuum seal, leaving the water and coffee to brew in the upper chamber. When the flame or heat is turned down, and then off, the vacuum seal breaks and the smooth, mild brew returns to the bottom beaker, ready for consumption.

"The vacuum adds drama and an intimacy," said Mr. Baquet, who finds that the pour-overs and vacuum pots are more popular on weekends when people have the time to wait the requisite four minutes or so. "That's when a lot of customers come in to slow down for a bit and tell us about their lives."

With locations in Southampton, Westhampton Beach, and Water Mill, Hampton Coffee Company has been serving house roasts since 1994, but when Mr. Belkin introduced the granite-topped pour-over bar — part of the Coffee Experience Store in Southampton — in 2013, he focused on a more educational customer experience.

"We want people to be part of the whole coffee process," he said. Baristas serve as guides to any of 24 rotating seasonal coffees — many bought from small farms, Mr. Belkin said — which can be brewed a number of ways. "For us, it's a farm to table movement," he said.

A dozen fresh roasts are offered by the pound, each with cupping notes that identify flavor profiles like chocolate, cherry and apricot.

Although coffee drinks may be flavored with syrup or decorated with latte art, foamed milk toppings that have been shaped into hearts and rosettes, many coffee experts, like Tiffany Rivera, 25, the general manager at the four-year old Roast Coffee and Tea Trading Company, suggest drinking artisanal brews straight.

“You don’t need to mask any of our coffees with milk and sugar,” she said. “Same coffee, same batch and we’ll brew it different ways so that you can tell the difference. I always tell people to try it first black.”

Tasting flights are also offered at the Trading Company, so that customers can sample different house roasts and brews, and learn about their own preferences.

“We’re trying to educate Long Island about coffee,” Ms. Rivera said. “For all these years, people have just used coffee to get the caffeine out of it,” she continued. “Now it’s really changing and people are realizing you can get something really special.”

### **Roasted Beans and Custom Brews**

#### **GENTLE BREW COFFEE**

151 East Park Avenue  
Long Beach  
516-605-2370  
gentlebrewcoffee.com

Batch brews, pour-overs, vacuum pots and cold brews.

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#### **COFFEE EXPERIENCE STORE, HAMPTON COFFEE COMPANY**

749 County Road 39A  
Southampton  
631-353-3088  
hamptoncoffee.com

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## **ROAST COFFEE AND TEA TRADING COMPANY**

41 East Main Street

Patchogue

631-312-5027

[roastcoffeeandtea.com](http://roastcoffeeandtea.com)

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Open Mondays through Thursdays, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays, 7 a.m. to midnight; Sundays, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.

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