

FOREWORD

This book is not just another textbook. Rather, it is a record and an explanation of my quest to discover the pure joy found in a cup of espresso coffee. For more than two-and-a-half decades, I have been involved in the selecting, roasting, packing, brewing, tasting and marketing of specialty coffee. Over this time, there have been enormous changes within the coffee industry; not just in my own country of Australia, but all around the world.

Why is it, that of all people, an Australian is writing a book about espresso coffee? As it happens, Australia enjoyed a large influx of Italian immigrants after the Second World War. In turn, they established a vibrant espresso culture that eventually took over the landscape. As a matter of fact, Australia now has the highest market penetration of home electric espresso machines in the world. Yes, more than Italy. Although we can't claim to be the sole arbiters of espresso taste, our national verve for innovation, an inclination to challenge authority, and a solid espresso heritage, provided a very fertile field for espresso to spring up in this most unlikely place. Perhaps this humble field down under may provide a small glimpse into the future, with the rest of the world

following suit and migrating toward espresso-based coffees.

For someone who has made his livelihood from coffee, true joy boils down to one thing. A few sips of thick, syrupy, bittersweet nectar that resembles a rich, dark mocha chocolate liquid mixed with smooth complex spices. This is espresso coffee. The heart of coffee.

It is this humble espresso shot, a thimbleful of black coffee poured in front of our eyes, which has become the foundation of vast coffee empires and complete café menus. It sustains untold households, from the low-paid, humble plantation worker who picks the coffee, to the hi-tech, chic café society set who consumes it.

Of the thousands of coffees tested by professional cuppers each year, only occasionally will someone come across an espresso coffee that has all the elements of perfection. This sublime taste experience is what some professionals describe as “seeing God in the cup”.

It is this experience that excites enormous passion. It drives coffee professionals, as well as many people from all walks of life, to almost fanatically pursue the experience again and again. It requires an investment in learning, because the perfect espresso coffee is so confounding and elusive. Just as a beautiful mirage shimmers in the distance, or the proverbial

end of the rainbow beckons, so too often the wonderful taste of espresso coffee seems just beyond our grasp.

Enormous amounts of time, energy and money have been invested in capturing this elusive taste, not only for personal joy, but for business reasons as well. For if the espresso coffee shot is not taken to its fullest potential, the rest of the coffee menu, and the empire, will falter.

This book is a description of a coffee philosophy, a muse with a few practical hints and a few personal stories that could act as a guide to some. This approach differs from that of numerous textbooks on espresso in that it gets to the heart and soul of espresso. I could say it is a bit like a surgeon though, who sets out to use his scalpel to try and locate a person's spirit. This was always going to be mission impossible.

Coffee's rich history has been told countless times in books that highlight the romance and reach of coffee's past and present. This book is not so much about the exotic countries that coffee is grown in. Instead, it is about what makes the difference between two cafes located side by side. For instance, one may be packed with people, buzzing with vibrant conversation and electrifying ambience, while the other lies empty and lifeless.

A certain alluring mystique periodically attaches itself to coffee. In our current times, that mystique is based around the relatively new form of coffee called espresso. This book is about embracing the invigorating mystique that is espresso coffee, while it also sets out to burst the myths that shroud and hinder the wonderful experience of seeing God in an espresso cup.

My hope is that this book will inspire you in your quest for a great espresso... an experience that can seem so simple, yet is so gloriously complex.