

1.6 THE QUALITY OF ESPRESSO COFFEE

Three coffee experiences can be lived throughout the day:

- 1 coffee for waking up is still preferred as a hot, dilute beverage;
- 2 espresso, as has been seen, takes the lion's share of coffees at breaks, especially in Latin countries and above all in Italy;
- 3 in Anglo-Saxon or northern European countries, espresso is considered a speciality suitable for relaxing, where feeling and care are involved in its preparation.

The most appreciated characteristics of espresso are its creaminess, body and the strength of its aroma, associated with stimulating properties, despite the fact that espresso contains less caffeine than the more dilute coffees do. Espresso therefore represents a benchmark universally recognized as being a great pleasure and a symbol of Italian culture, so much so that the highest expression of coffee is that served in bars in Italy, in restaurants in France, and restaurants and coffee shops in the rest of the world, precisely because it is coffee prepared with a professional machine.

As regards the nutritional content (see Chapter 10), the only expectations one can have from the consumption of an espresso are the intake of a moderate dose of caffeine, known above all as a stimulating pleasure, boosting intellectual activity, improving memory and concentration, quickening reflexes, making it easier to stay awake, improving one's mood, etc., and the fact of consuming a product devoid *per se* of calories.

The real consumer's expectations, however, are of a hedonistic nature, because drinking a good espresso is genuinely wonderful. Espresso is a true elixir, a concentrate of exquisite aromas lasting long after it has been drunk. Even sight and touch are satisfied, thanks to the striped hazelnut colour of the cream and to its full body. In moments of relaxation at home this tasting rite is preceded by the eagerly awaited rite of preparation, when it is enjoyable to play out the actions of the barman, enriching it with your own secrets, as you anticipate the pleasure of its taste.

As far as service is concerned, consumers require the roasted and ground coffee to retain the fragrance of the aromas developed during roasting until the time the package is opened, and they want to know the characteristics of the product they are consuming (see Chapter 6). It should also go a long way, in that only a small amount is needed to make a good cup of coffee and, once open, the aroma should last until the contents of the package run out.