



"Cops are goofs. They hate their jobs. Doing [rescue] is the only way they keep from going insane."



"Firemen are a bunch of prima donnas. We're much, much, better trained."



"In the '70s, when the city was burning down, the police didn't respond to emergencies. They left it up to us."



"Firemen stay in their firehouses and watch Cagney and Lacey and Kojak. They all think we look like Magnum, with girls dying to meet us because we carry guns and they don't."

**COPS
VS.
FIREMEN**
P. 16

9
•
21
•
88

70 DAYS

NEW YORK

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 25

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF NEW YORK

ONE DOLLAR

COFFEE SOCIETY

THE LAST WORD ON THE LAST LEGAL HIGH



The Buzz
The Beans
The Risk
The Paraphernalia
The Addiction
The Withdrawal

Peladin

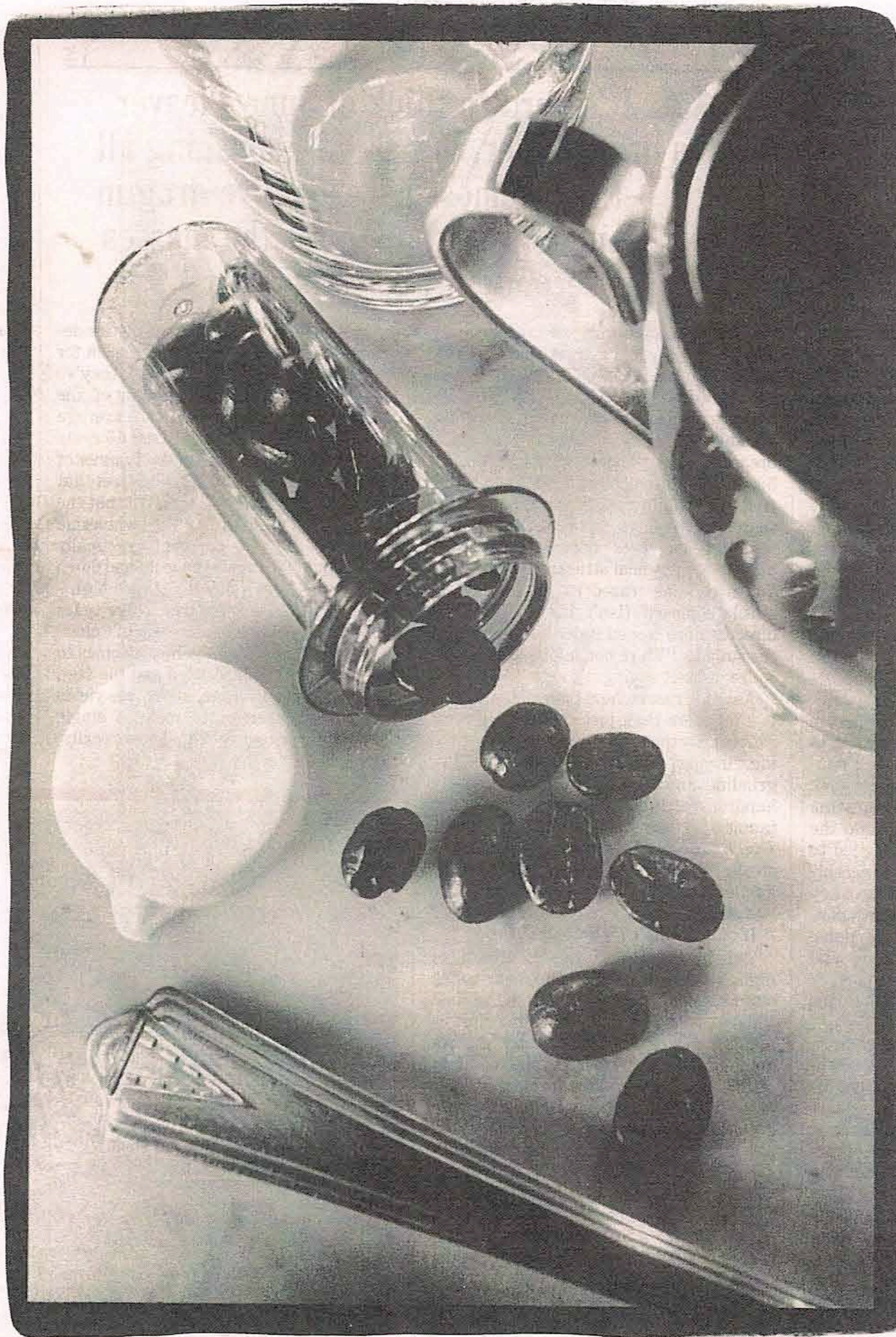
USER'S MANUAL

COFFEE

I recently switched from cheese Danish to oat bran at breakfast, and I have replaced tanning with number 15 sun block. I do not drink (anything stronger than Bordeaux), and I do not smoke (anything). I am not eating any hot dogs, and I am not sleeping with anyone I have known fewer than 137 years. In the interest of my health and longevity on the planet, I have forfeited nearly every close personal vice that once put a twinkle in my eye or a smile on my lips. But if you tell me to give up coffee, I will come to your house with Juan Valdez and hot-wire your Krups.

Coffee was my first vice, and it's the one I am stuck with. I learned to drink it in college—black—at about the same time that I tried warming up to whiskey, and for the same reason: because I thought such habits were sexy and sophisticated, and I wanted to impress an older business-school boyfriend. I neglected to foresee that throwing up is not sexy. I also neglected to see that the boyfriend was one of the great shits of the Western world.

I still have my first coffee mug (I keep Q-tips in it now for old times' sake). It was terra-cotta lined with white porcelain (the better to set off the black coffee), purchased at a luncheonette



PHOTOGRAPHS BY NOIA LOPEZ

BY AIMEE LEE BALL

L
I
F
E

PERSPECTIVE

According to Frank Rifkin, editor of the *Nutrition Health Review*, coffee would not be approved today if it were presented to the federal Food and Drug Administration for consideration—it probably would be confined to a doctor's prescription. The reasons, he says, are self evident, "because of the side effects from caffeine that various people suffer from—irregular heart-beat, dizziness, indigestion, high blood pressure, hypoglycemia."

How much coffee is too much? That depends on the individual—"ten different people will have ten different reactions," Rifkin says. So there you have it, and there you have not.

COFFEE

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

called Howie's across the road from my dorm. Others pulled all-nighters boiling up instant Nescafe with an immersion cord, but I made countless wee-hour trips to Howie's for the genuine article. If Boston blue laws had applied to the dispensing of Howie's brew, there would very likely be no (totally useless) diploma bearing my name in my mother's closet today.

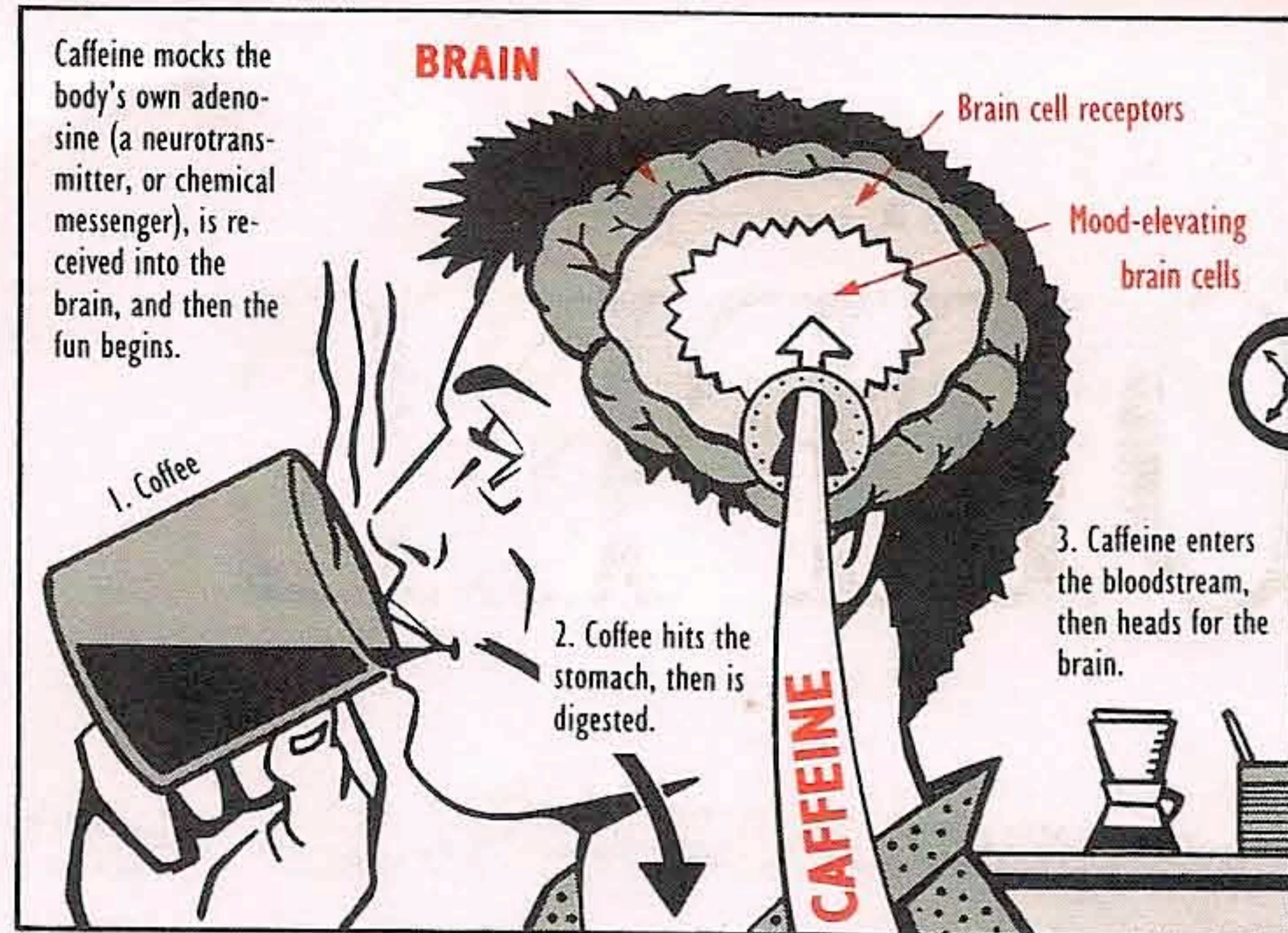
I often wish I had the sort of life seen in Frank Capra movies and episodes of *Be-witched*, where friends and neighbors show up at the door and are invited into the kitchen with the words, "I just put on a fresh pot of coffee." Instead, I have the sort of mornings where coffee is prepared semicomatously and imbibed near-intravenously, in the company of Jane Pauley, and I have the sort of afternoons where coffee is taken in tentative gulps from the torn-off corner of a plastic lid on a train or a bus, or at a meeting in a midtown tower, brought in by a secretary who has been untouched by the women's movement, and proffered in a Styrofoam cup, which, we are now told, can leak possibly carcinogenic material into the coffee itself. *Leave It to Beaver* was never like this.

It's hard to think of June Cleaver as a drug dealer, but she was pushing all right—the foremost psychoactive drug in North America, an opiate for the masses second only to religion. (In New York alone we drink about 1 million cups of coffee every hour.) Caffeine is a card-carrying member of a group of chemicals called methylxanthines that stimulate the central nervous system. It's also an alkaloid (like its cousins strychnine, morphine, and nicotine), and the members of this cozy family cause a state of physical dependency. Caffeine may be the mildest of the habit-forming drugs, the drug of choice for billions, but it is no less a drug than a black beauty or a sloe gin fizz.

You are now nodding vigorously and saying, "So that's why I like it," hmmm? Caffeine works by a sort of brainy legerdemain, a scam going on in your own cerebral cortex. There is a natural chemical in the brain called adenosine that is a building block of RNA and that acts like a neurotransmitter (or chemical messenger). Caffeine molecules moving through the blood look a lot like adenosine, and the brain cell receptors that are designed to receive adenosine are tricked into accepting this pretender, caffeine, just like a key into a lock. But caffeine frees the mood-raising cells, producing the dependable coffee buzz: you toss back a mug and you're awake, alert, and as perky as Mary Hart (okay, as perky as normal humans get).

The pick-me-up properties of caffeine have been duly noted ever since a ninth-century Arabian goatherd noticed that his flock was unusually chipper after snacking on certain shrubs and his buddies up at the monastery began whipping up concoctions of the berries to stay awake during evening prayers. That's the way the story goes, anyway. In fact, the Arabian origin of the word coffee is *qahwah*, meaning "that which gives strength," a fact attested to by anyone who has ever paced a hospital corridor or a police station with paper cup in hand.

Almost nothing else was known about coffee and human behavior until pretty recently. What was found out is a variation on the theme that whatever goes up must come down: the biochemical lift from caffeine is followed by the release of insulin, which causes blood sugar to fall and leaves



“It's hard to think of June Cleaver as a drug dealer, but she was pushing all right—the foremost psychoactive drug in North America, an opiate for the masses second only to religion.”

you droopy. Caffeine also relaxes the muscles of the digestive tract and the kidneys—that means it makes you pee. And because caffeine is a diuretic, it has a dehydrating effect on the body. There are possible but plausible links to fibrocystic breast disease, pancreatic cancer, ulcers, heart palpitations, and birth defects as well as irritability and anxiety. Several research teams have reported that rats on high-caffeine diets become aggressive and launch physical attacks on other rats, and a caffeine-crazed rat may bite and mutilate himself. (Isn't this fun?) An FDA director once issued a definite maybe on the subject: "We're not saying it's unsafe, we're just not saying it's safe."

As some researchers have noted, coffee is a lot more than just steaming, savory caffeine. By the time it gets through washing, drying, milling, sorting, roasting, grinding, and brewing, it contains literally hundreds of other substances, including tannic acid, the stuff used to tan leather. The *Better Life Journal* gave coffee a strong recommendation as a cleaner for kitchen floors, whitewall tires, and stainless steel.

If only it didn't *taste* so damn good.

This is, as we go to press, still a legal high. We do not need to make our coffee purchases on tenement stoops in the East Village. And the maligning of coffee is nothing new. The 18th-century gastronome Brillat-Savarin wrote: "It is the duty of all papas and mamas to forbid their children coffee, unless they wish to have little dried-up machines, stunted and old, at the age of 20." Puritan Englishwomen published a *Petition Against Coffee*, stating, "Coffee leads men to trifle away their time, scald their chops and spend their money, all for a little base, black, thick, nasty, bitter, stinking, nauseous puddle water."

This nasty stuff is the world's second-most-traded commodity (oil is number one). It's bought and sold on the floor of the Coffee, Sugar, and Cocoa Exchange, just like silver or stocks. Some coffee merchants deal in futures—that is, they agree to buy or sell a certain amount at a set price on a particular future date—and they're always hedging: they buy a ship-

ment from, say, Costa Rica in July for delivery to New York in August and sell it for September delivery, hoping that they've predicted correctly the direction of the market. Up until the mid-'70s the average price of green coffee was around 65 cents a pound, but on one night in the summer of 1975, Brazil was hit by a killing frost that destroyed over a billion trees. Without the surfeit of Brazilian coffee, wholesale prices shot up 500 per cent practically overnight, while they've been up and down since, prices have generally stayed high.

But consider: a coffee tree is five years old before it bears a usable crop of "cherries" with precious pits (when it comes to coffee, the fruit is discarded and the seed is used). On the average, every tree yields only enough cherries to make a single pound of roasted coffee. Theoretically,

you could grow a coffee tree on a terrace in Tribeca, but the taste of the final product depends on magical combinations of soil, sun, air, and altitude.

And it has no calories.

To its detractors, we can argue that coffee was *blessed* by Pope Clement VIII. Bach wrote a *Coffee Cantata*. It's even been considered a patriotic choice ever since the Boston Tea Party. (I keep trying to like tea, and I do truly love and admire the civilized British custom of an afternoon respite with a scone and a watercress sandwich, but the restorative powers of tea seem largely confined, along with chicken soup, to the aftermath of bronchitis.)

Writers have long known that coffee works in tandem with the muses. "Once coffee hits the stomach," wrote Balzac, "ideas get under way like the battalions of the Grande Armee. . . . Memories charge forth . . . comparisons move ahead . . . flashes of wit arrive . . . the paper clothes itself with ink." Norman Mailer's space travelers took spiritual enlightenment from coffee in *Of a Fire on the Moon*, working in the Apollo News Centre with its endless aisles of desks, telephones, and typewriters, plus one giant Buddha of a coffee urn. "Coffee," wrote Mailer, "is the closest the Press ever comes to satori."

My vision of the future is different. At some point, I am convinced, all of New York will be reduced to one giant Benetton, one giant Duane Reade, one giant New York Health & Racquet Club, and a big pit under the West Side Highway where we will have to buy our coffee on the black market. But maybe I'm wrong. Maybe we'll embrace the standards of Japanese coffee shops ("kohi shoppu," they're called colloquially), where one is often expected to state the exact temperature and amount of the water preferred as well as the kind and quantity of beans, along the lines of "Columbia Supremo, medium roast, 93 degrees C., 100 cc, 25 grams." And the coffee is always served with the words "*Omatase itashimashita*," which means "I have kept you waiting." Sort of gives one pause when one is used to unspeakable swill (half of it in the saucer) served at the Two/Three/Four Guys from

DECAF, DE-BUZZ

Here's the poop on decaffeinated coffee. (I warn you—you're not going to like it.) In chemical processing, the green coffee beans are first steamed and mixed with a colorless solvent called methylene chloride, then heated to remove the residue of the solvent. In the "Swiss water process," the beans are soaked for hours in water that draws off the caffeine, as well as coffee solids essential to the taste. That water is then run through a treated charcoal bed, leaving the caffeine behind, and the beans are again mixed with the water to reclaim the flavorful solids.

The reason there is a "Swiss water process" and not an American water process or, for that



matter, a Lithuanian water process, is that a Swiss company developed the charcoal-filter step (other water processes use chemicals to take the caffeine out of the water). And all the coffee beans grown in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America must be shipped, unroasted, to Europe for this treatment, adding considerably to the

cost of the final product.

In this country we're stuck with chemical decaffeination. Most coffee mavens agree that this kind of decaf actually *tastes* better, but the methylene chloride that is used has been found to produce tumors in lab animals. The government, in its wisdom, has banned the use of this chemical in hair spray but says it's safe for decaffeinating coffee. Go figure. Apparently the cumulative effect of methylene chloride from an aerosol spray can be carcinogenic, but the trace levels left on coffee beans do not pose a risk to humans.

Parisian waiters often refer contemptuously to an order of decaf as a *faux*, which may be the last word on the subject.

Greece.

I know that if I met a man who was as persnickety and anal about coffee as I am, I would consider it a serious foreboding, a clue to his intolerance with the less-than-perfect in other arenas of his life, such as, for instance, me. I, on the completely other hand, am much more generous and benevolent about flawed performance in fellow humans than in my food and drink. I just don't like muddy waters (except the Hudson). And I cherish the words of fellow coffee lover Voltaire: "It is a poison, certainly, but a slow poison, for I've been drinking it these 84 years."

THE PARAPHERNALIA

A few years ago, certain coffee cognoscenti embraced the conceit that purists should really be roasting their own. The beauty of this idea was that green unroasted beans can be stored for months, even years, without ill effects, while roasted beans begin to lose flavor immediately. (The volatile oils that make coffee smell wonderful become quickly stale, ultimately rancid.) Melitta came out with a small electric coffee roaster, but the ill-conceived design made it pretty much a bust: you couldn't see the coffee without taking off the lid, and since the air didn't circulate, the beans came out an inconsistent color—some light, some dark. It also took a long time, so you ended up cooking out a lot of flavor.

For diehards, there are still alternatives. You can roast beans in a frying pan on the stove (although you're likely to have a brown kitchen after a while). You can, for that matter, stir them over a campfire or a Bunsen burner, although none of these methods offers much quality control. There's a German coffee roaster called the Sirocco that has an electronically heated hot-air blower, with a clear-glass canister for checking the beans and a cooling cycle to stop the roasting process. Drawbacks: it's big and it's expensive. And you have to roast a minimum of a quarter-pound at a time. But a novel approach puts the popcorn popper on double duty: you put in a small amount of green beans and let them bop around for 10 to 15 minutes, depending on the roast you want. You let them cool, then you grind.

Or do you? Some coffee pros believe that grinding at home is the most significant thing you can do to improve the quality of your coffee. But those little home grinders are ineffective at best (what you need is a heavy-duty mill)—they produce randomly chopped coffee, which is okay if you're brewing drip coffee (the inconsistencies will still drip well) but too imprecise for other methods. Braun and Krups both make good mills with an adjustable range of fine or coarse grinds, and an excellent home grinder made by Jericho is like a mini professional model. But the sine qua non of mills may be the Coffex by Olympia, a machine of almost surgical Swiss precision. It goes for around \$160, but the only part you'll need to replace is the set of stainless-steel burrs that do the actual work, and you'll pass it on to your grandchildren.

Now, what are you going to put your roasted and ground coffee in? Not a percolator—the coffee boils and gets bitter, even if it is the taste of your childhood in Ohio. (People who like creamed coffee do like perked because it stays very hot, but any coffee pro will tell you that creamed coffee is not real coffee—it's more of a

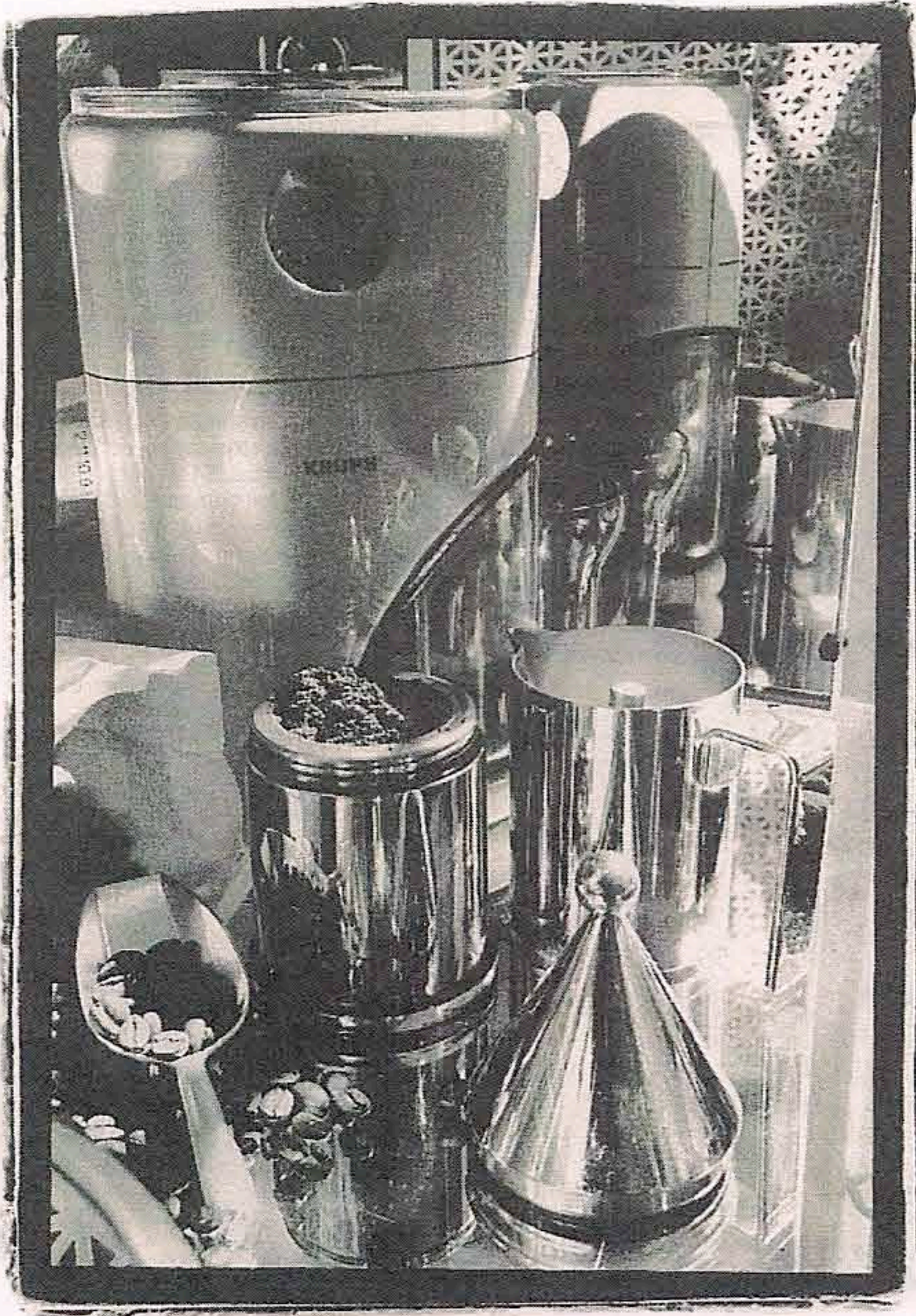
coffee-flavored beverage. And putting Sweet 'n Low in good coffee is sort of like buying a great apartment and then decorating with clown paintings on black velvet.) Some of the pros like the automatic-drip method: the water is heated to exactly the right temperature and is filtered through the coffee at exactly the right speed. The manual-drip method—a Melitta or Chemex—puts you in charge of the pouring, but with a little care and attention to the measuring of both coffee and water, this inexpensive method works well. Whatever method you use, start with cold tap water: hot water picks up impurities in the pipes, and water that has already boiled and is sitting in a kettle has lost its oxygen.

A few words about filters: paper is popular, but white paper products made in this country, from coffee filters to TP, are bleached, a process that can leave traces

party, but I can't imagine fussing with it at 8 a.m. And the Toddy is about as gimmicky as coffee gets: you put coarsely ground coffee in the top, let it soak overnight, then pull the plug and let the liquid go through a filter, producing an extract that's stored in a jar—sort of liquid instant coffee. People who like it love it—mostly transplanted Californians, says one shop owner. But why bother to deal with real coffee if you're going to treat it like instant?

Addendum: If you have a genuine need for instant coffee, consider buying your favorite blend in a Turkish grind—powdery, almost like flour. You can use it like instant—you'll get some residue at the bottom of the cup, but it will still taste better than anything in a jar at Grand Union.

There's a big variety of espresso makers on the market now. The owner of Zabar's says they're mostly garbage. He carries



of dioxin, a possible carcinogen. Some people have switched to permanent gold-plated filters, but they got upset when the gold wore off, exposing copper, and coffee dripped this way had more sediment. Cloth filters are cheap and reusable, but even with diligent rinsing they become objectionable in appearance. And coffee, as you know from shirt stains, just doesn't wash out.

There are a couple of clever, albeit superfluous, coffee makers around—more boutique items than everyday equipment. The Melior is gorgeous, and I carried one home in my lap from Paris (where it's one-fourth the U.S. price), but the coffee is murky, and by the time you wait to push the plunger through the grinds and water, the coffee gets cold. It's best for making a reasonable facsimile of espresso, where you're expecting something of a sediment. There's a vacuum-siphon machine that would be fun for show-and-tell at a dinner

party, but I can't imagine fussing with it at 8 a.m. And the Toddy is about as gimmicky as coffee gets: you put coarsely ground coffee in the top, let it soak overnight, then pull the plug and let the liquid go through a filter, producing an extract that's stored in a jar—sort of liquid instant coffee. People who like it love it—mostly transplanted Californians, says one shop owner. But why bother to deal with real coffee if you're going to treat it like instant?

Addendum: If you have a genuine need for instant coffee, consider buying your favorite blend in a Turkish grind—powdery, almost like flour. You can use it like instant—you'll get some residue at the bottom of the cup, but it will still taste better than anything in a jar at Grand Union.

There's a big variety of espresso makers on the market now. The owner of Zabar's says they're mostly garbage. He carries

them and he says they're garbage. Espresso depends on water being forced through grinds by pressurized steam, a process that must take place quickly (hence the term espresso), and most machines don't produce enough steam. They also break quickly. The state-of-the-art espresso maker is made by Olympia—these are the Tucker cars of coffee, built to last with maybe a change of gasket, and quite extraordinary to look at, like high-tech erector sets. The least expensive of these is about \$300. If you're on a budget, you're better off with a little \$10 Moka manual. It isn't authentic (no steam) but the coffee will be dark and rich, and you can still pay for your children's orthodontia. And if you can't imagine a drive to East Hampton without a little espresso in the BMW, Hammacher Schlemmer carries an automobile espresso machine that operates on 12-volt batteries and can be mounted on the dashboard.

A caveat: in this country we tend to like cute—cute and gimmicky with built-in obsolescence. If you buy a coffee maker with a timer that starts working by itself while you're in the shower, both the ground coffee and the water get stale as they sit out all night. If you buy a coffee maker with a "stop action" that allows you to take a cup in the middle of making ten cups, you're going to get a peculiarly strong first cup. And with any coffee maker, make at least half the capacity of the pot. You can't get a good two cups out of a 12-cupper.

THE BEANS

A purchase of coffee, among other activities in this city, is a leap of faith. There are thousands of places to buy, from the local Korean grocer to the big department stores, but you have to accept that when you're paying for Hawaiian kona, you're getting Hawaiian kona, and that when you're buying decaf, the coffee hasn't been processed with Clorox in a bathtub on West 72nd Street. Quick turnover in a shop is crucial to freshness. For a litmus test, check out the French roast: it should have an oily glaze that comes from "sweating" after roasting. If the beans are dry, they've been sitting around too long—and, chances are, so have the other beans in the store. The best tip-off to the kind of decaf you're getting is the unroasted beans: the Swiss water process will leave beans that are drier, more wrinkled, and a deeper green than those that have been chemically processed. (And anything that's labeled "naturally decaffeinated" is not Swiss water processed.)

What follows is a Baedeker to New York's coffee specialists. Zabar's is included here because, though its stock's not limited to coffee, it does roast its own.

OREN'S DAILY ROAST. 1574 First Ave. (737-2690) and 434 Third Ave. (779-1241). Oren Bloostein was an assistant buyer at Saks before he got religious about coffee and went into the business. He roasts the beans himself in a catalytic converter—small batches, just 7 pounds at a time—at the back of his tiny, impeccable store on the Upper East Side, starting at 4:30 a.m. (The new Murray Hill branch gets deliveries right from the roaster every day.) Bloostein's sensibilities show in his broad but unusual selection. La Minita, a beautifully balanced Costa Rican, is \$8.50 per pound. Ethiopia Yrgacheffe is grown on one of Haile Selassie's old estates and has a clean, delicate flavor (\$6.99 per pound). While there is almost no true mocha coffee available from Yemen, there are several mocha-style substitutes from just across the Red Sea: Longberry Harrar has a similar smooth taste and is a bargain at \$7.99 per pound. Tanzania Peaberry is full-bodied with a slightly nutty aftertaste—similar to Kenya but not so winy (\$6.99 per pound). Zimbabwe is relatively low in caffeine for a regular coffee (\$6.99 per pound), and there are almost 20 Swiss water process decafs here. The house blend is served at Jonathan Waxman (nee Jams). All of the coffees are available green at a 10 percent discount, and one of Oren's customers swears that if a pregnant woman drinks a tea made out of green beans, she'll have a boy.

THE COFFEE GRINDER. 348 E. 66th St. (737-3490). This small shop sells 700 pounds a week to neighborhood fans and discriminating restaurants such as the Box Tree, John Clancy's, and Les Delices Guy Pascal. Its French roast is special—made with Mexican beans that are a little sweeter than Colombian (\$6.95 per pound)—and its Guatemalan Antigua is clean and crisp (\$6.95 per pound). Because of space limitations, some of the decafs are available only in 12-ounce vacuum packs at \$8.40. Chicory at \$2 per pound can be added to any blend, if that's your thing. Some people brew chicory (which is actually the root of the Belgian endive, roasted and pulverized) by itself, but then some people like canned ravioli. (Taste it raw first—that's the flavor that will be in your cup.) Co-owner Russell Evely likes to talk coffee. If you're not satisfied with a purchase, he wants to make you happy ("I'm like a doctor. I can change the prescription till it works"). He swears he can see the deterioration of coffee just a few days after it's roasted (we may be getting into princess-and-the-pea territory here), but he understands those who weigh convenience against freshness and ask for their coffee ground in the store.

THE SENSUOUS BEAN. 66 W. 70th St. (724-7725). This shop expanded in its move from closet space around the corner on Columbus, but it still buys only a week's amount at a time from its Long Island supplier—deliveries come in on Thursdays. Manager Frank Juliano drinks only decaf himself, and the shop's repertoire reflects his tastes: 19 different decaffeinated coffees are available—all Swiss water

Pocket Oasis.
...the concrete desert...dusty...dry. Desperately seeking taste...refreshment. There, in that shop...a little elegant round tin...filled with little hard candies. Lush fruit taste blossoms. More tins...citrus...mints! This is no mirage!

Just say "La Vie", short for La Vosgienne french hard candies. And find the oasis for those seeking taste.

La Vie
The french hard candies time hasn't changed.

American Glacé's 50-50 challenge

50 calories of frozen yogurt



50 calories of American Glacé



Less than 1/2 the calories of frozen yogurt.
Creamy Tahitian Vanilla, Dutch Chocolate, Kona Coffee, California Chocolate, Red Raspberry and Strawberry.
Only 12 calories per ounce. No fat. No cholesterol.

American Glacé

Ask for it all over town.

K © American Glacé 1988

MILLEFLEURS' HERBAL MINERAL WRAP
Our own combination of 111 herbs & minerals:

- 5" loss guaranteed on first full body wrap.
- 100% natural and safe—based on 17 years research.
- Eliminates cellulite and releases stored toxins.
- Removes fat—not water.
- Heals, tightens and rejuvenates skin.
- Restorative, relaxing, and therapeutic benefits for all.

Aromatherapy, Facials, Reflexology, Massage, Shiatsu
Cool seaweed wraps to refresh summer skin
13-17 Laight Street • Soho 212-966-3656

BEANS

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

process—and he'll custom-blend anything you want (although the staff tend to roll their eyes bemusedly at the customer who says, "I want 10 percent Kenya, 3 ounces Bourbon santos, a touch of Turkish..."). A favorite is the strong and smooth La Semeuse, the coffee served at Lutece (\$9 per pound, \$10 per pound of decaf). Celebes Kalossi is from Indonesia—it's the strongest of the brown roasts after espresso, with a distinctively nutty taste and smell (\$9 per pound). Jamaica Blue Mountain is here—very smooth and rich—but at \$22.50 per pound, even the store manager says it ought to get up and do the dishes for you. (A high price on coffee means low availability, and almost all Blue Mountain goes to Japan. The Japanese got first dibs on it years ago when they subsidized the crop.) The Sensuous Bean has lots of flavored coffees, with little bits and things in with the beans, including hazelnut, coconut, and Seville Orange ("It's the Baskin-Robbins of coffee"). And there's a good selection of low-acid coffees (although *acid* is not a pejorative word—it means brightness in the cup), including a Mexican Fino Altura that is a nice way to wake up (\$5.40 per pound) and Tip of the Andes for those who want a less sharp, almost sweet taste (\$5.50 per pound).

PORTO RICO IMPORTING COMPANY. 201 Bleeker St. (477-5421). Owner Peter Longo is a real cutie. The family business has been on Bleeker Street since 1907 (his mother and his Aunt Millie still live upstairs), and he is passionate about his product (he even names house blends after old girlfriends). He buys only green beans, does his own roasting in Brooklyn, and all of the beans in the store are sold and replaced within a week. Some of the blends reflect the owner's own odyssey of coffee, including his recent efforts to detox (decaf) without sacrificing coffee pleasure: Peter's light blend is half-and-half regular and decaf (\$5.50 per pound). Budapest is a strong, dark coffee that would welcome a hit of some liqueur after dinner (\$4.75 per pound). Cafe blend is the approximation of what's served in many Village bistros (\$4.75 per pound). Prices here are reasonable for premium coffees, including the espressos (\$4.75 per pound) and flavors like Double Nut Fudge (owner's favorite, \$5.99 per pound). Customers include Odeon, Indochine, and Cafe Luxembourg. And although Longo drinks his own fine coffee all day, he admits, "I kinda nurse 'em so I drink less. And I don't drink coffee on an empty stomach."

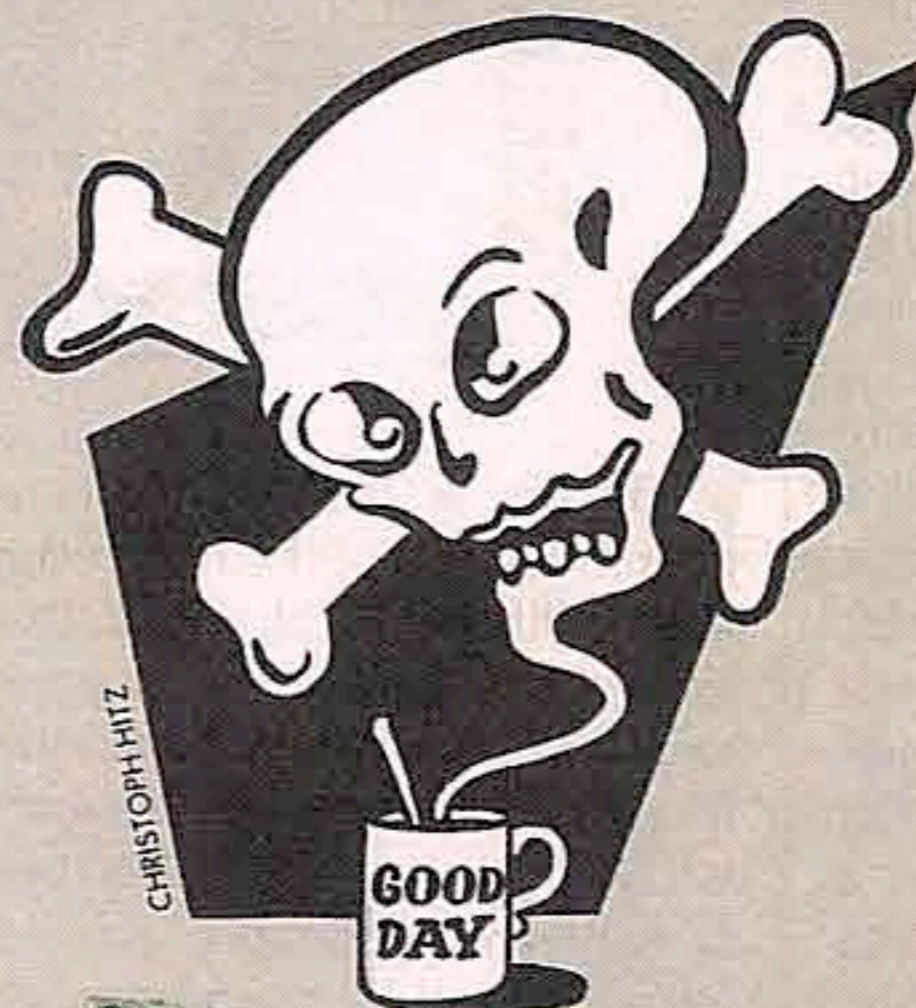
SCHAPIRA COFFEE COMPANY. (a.k.a. Flavor Cup), 117 W. 10th St. (675-3733). This is a family business—85 years at the location established by Grandpa Schapira—and they roast right in the store in a huge mother of a machine that's been around since the beginning of time and handles 132

pounds of green coffee beans in one giant gulp. Venezuelan Maracaibo is aromatic but light-bodied—a smooth and slightly sweet coffee (\$5.20 per pound). Djimmah is small and ugly in the bean but yields a piquant aroma and, like all Ethiopian coffees, a pungent and complex taste (\$5.20 per pound). Five Swiss water process decafs are offered, including Sumatra Mandheling, with a sturdy, almost syrupy richness (\$7.95 per pound). You won't find every coffee under the sun, but you will find quality, consistency, and honesty: if it says Jamaica Blue Mountain, it was grown on a blue mountain in Jamaica (but will cost a princely \$14.50 for a puny 6-ounce tin).

McNULTY'S. 109 Christopher St. (242-5351). This is the place for when you have an emergency need for decaf cinnamon Colombian in between *Moonlighting* and *thirtysomething*—the shop is open until eleven every night but Sunday. There's a huge selection: 30 straight varieties, 10 decaf (all Swiss water process), a dozen flavored coffees, more than 20 blends—and owner Tai Lee, a solemn but obliging fellow, will tell you *exactly* what goes into each of the blends with cute but enigmatic names ("Old Times" is one-third Colombian, one-third Maracaibo, one-third Santos, at \$6.40 per pound). Several coffees from Douwe Egberts are offered, as a service to customers who've tasted these coffees in Holland and want them at home. They come in what's called a brick-pack: vacuum-sealed with every molecule of air squeezed out so they're fresh. They're also pricey, about \$5.75 for 8 ounces. Mr. Lee's heritage is reflected in some unusual Asian choices, including India Mysore, an aromatic and slightly sharp coffee that's found mostly in Europe (\$7 per pound) and China Yunnan, which resembles a good Java with a smooth taste and heavy body (\$7.20 per pound). Trivia: the original McNulty was a surrogate-court judge who found coffee to be a lucrative sideline, and his circa-1920 scale that is still used to weigh the beans was made by one of the companies that eventually became IBM.

ZABAR'S. 2245 Broadway (787-2000). Nobody beats Zabar's for price—but nobody. If they even suspect another store of undercutting them, they'll start slashing prices to maintain the PR edge, and they can stay cheap because of volume (30,000 pounds sold in a week). You want to commune with your coffee supplier? Go someplace else. Here you get beans in a bag at going-out-of-business prices—that's it. Zabar's buys green beans and does its own roasting in Brooklyn every Tuesday morning—it's in the store by 1 o'clock. The secret house blend is \$3.98 per pound ("I know what's in it, but I'm not telling," says owner Murray Klein). Two espressos are also \$3.98 per pound. Only 20 percent of Zabar's customers buy decaf—either chemically processed (\$4.49 per pound) or Swiss water process (\$5.98 per pound). No flavored coffees. "You want chocolate?" says Klein. "Make cocoa."

WHY IS RESTAURANT COFFEE SO LOUSY?



All of our coffee falls into one of two botanical groups. *Coffea arabica* is the right stuff—it's rich and delicate, with more fragrance and flavor, but it's sensitive and temperamental to grow. *Coffea robusta*, as the name implies, is sturdier, more prolific, but it ranges in taste from neutral to harsh—the beans are small and misshapen and

roast unevenly. Commercial blends are generally between 25 and 75 percent robusta beans (so are canned coffees). When coffee is brewed, its various acids, oils, ketones, and aldehydes begin to react with one another, but restaurant coffees, beginning with beans that have so little character or complexity, allow few chemical reactions, meaning an

insipid cup. Some restaurants lease their coffee-making equipment from a service with the understanding that they must buy the coffee from the same service. Even starting out with good beans, coffee can go wrong in the roasting, for the sake of economy. The longer it's roasted, the more moisture is lost, so there's less coffee in the end (as much as 25 percent goes up the chimney). When your coffee has a grassy, green, sharp taste, that's under-roasting. And, of course, if the restaurant uses too little coffee, you get bad coffee—it doesn't matter if it started out as great coffee. One pound of coffee should yield about 40 cups. Restaurants may stretch that to 80 cups. The coffee-cart lady who rings a bell at 11 o'clock in your office building may try to make a pound produce 120 cups.

That's why.