



PROFILE PHOTOGRAPHY BY NAT AND CODY GANTZ

A WHOLE BREWED WORLD

DIABLO JOURNEYS FROM BEAN TO MUG TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE EAST BAY'S COFFEE OBSESSION.

» THE LIFEblood OF SO MANY AMERICANS, COFFEE IS A POWERFUL PICK-ME-UP THAT HAS EXTRAORDINARY EFFECTS ON ONE'S DAY. BUT DO YOU REALLY KNOW WHERE YOUR COFFEE COMES FROM, WHY IT TASTES THE WAY IT DOES, OR WHAT ELEMENTS GO INTO YOUR CUP? WE CONSULTED EXPERTS, EXAMINED DIFFERENT CULTURES, AND EXPLORED THE MIGHTY COFFEE BEAN'S JOURNEY FROM PLANT TO CUP. IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP AND TRULY SMELL THE COFFEE.

MAGIC BEANS

Max Nicholas-Fulmer



BY LAUREN BONNEY

» LONG BEFORE IT HELPED YOU WAKE UP THIS MORNING, YOUR COFFEE STARTED OUT AS A LITTLE FRUIT SEED. LEARN ABOUT ITS BUZZED BEGINNINGS—AND HOW IT'S SIPPED AROUND THE GLOBE.

THE COFFEE TRADER
Royal Coffee's Max Nicholas-Fulmer takes the 40-year-old family business to new levels of caffeination.

In 1978, Bob Fulmer and Pete McLaughlin bought a single bag of green coffee (beans in their raw, unroasted state) and used it as a desk until they found a buyer. That one bag turned into two, and so on, creating the foundation for Oakland's Royal Coffee, a global green-coffee importer with warehouses across the United States and China. These days, the company—which sources its beans from more than 30 countries—is

led by Fulmer's son, Max Nicholas-Fulmer, a coffee trader who spent his youth traveling the world on coffee-buying trips.

"I have always liked being a part of this industry," Nicholas-Fulmer says. "I've always had it in my blood."

He's not kidding. In addition to his relatives starting Royal Coffee, Nicholas-Fulmer's grandfather was a coffee trader, and his cousins are professional roasters. "I come from coffee people," he jokes.

As a trader, Nicholas-Fulmer develops and maintains relationships with farmers all over the world. While his globe-trotting lifestyle may seem glamorous,

"it's not nearly as romantic as it sounds," Nicholas-Fulmer insists. "It's a lot of driving in Jeeps and flying to remote airports. There's a lot of work that goes into it."

Not to mention a lot of skill in knowing how to source the right green coffee. Luckily, Nicholas-Fulmer is a walking encyclopedia on the subject. As he explains, coffee beans are the seed of a fruit that grows on a flowering plant. "It's just like any other fruit," the trader says. "There's a freshness to it, and it has seasons, just like a peach. Different coffees arrive during different times of the year."

All coffee is grown near the equator in mountainous areas

ranging between 1,000 and 2,000 meters above sea level. And much like wine, coffee's terroir is affected by where it's grown, the climate, and how it's roasted.

The roasting process is crucial to Nicholas-Fulmer's business, and he does frequent cuppings—aka coffee tastings—to ensure his product is of the highest quality before selling it to clients such as Peet's and Philz, as well as numerous small-batch roasters.

After a full and fascinating explanation of his work, Nicholas-Fulmer reconsiders his earlier statement. "OK," he admits, "this is a pretty cool job." Yes, indeed, it is. royalcoffee.com.

COFFEE CUSTOMS

Discover how other caffeinated countries do it.

» **Australia:** The inventors of the flat white, Australians really value quality coffee. In fact, most Aussie eateries serve such superlative espresso drinks—prepared by well-paid, professional baristas—Starbucks wasn't able to stay in business there. Sorry, 'bucks fans.

» **Brazil:** As the largest coffee producer in the world, Brazil knows a thing or two about joe. Order a *cafezinho*, a small cup of filtered coffee with ample sugar.

» **Colombia:** One of the world's premier coffee-growing regions, Colombia is filled with small bars where patrons pop in to enjoy a quick, black *tinto* several times a day.

» **Ethiopia:** The motherland of coffee celebrates the buzzed bean with a tableside ritual, known as *buna*, which often lasts more than an hour before you get your first sip.

» **Indonesia:** Encompassing the islands of Java and Sumatra, Indonesia produces some of the world's best-regarded coffee. Locals pour boiling water straight over ground beans to make a cup of *kopi tubruk*.

» **Italy:** While everyone loves a good cappuccino, don't even think about ordering one after 11 a.m. in this European nation. Italians refrain from milky coffee in the afternoon and following meals.

» **Portugal:** There's a coffee shop on almost every street corner in Portugal, so if you find yourself in Lisbon, confidently walk up to the counter and order *um bica* for a smooth espresso.

» **Turkey:** Known as *türk kahvesi*, Turkish coffee is thick, dark, spiced (with a touch of sweetness), and usually brewed in a copper pot.

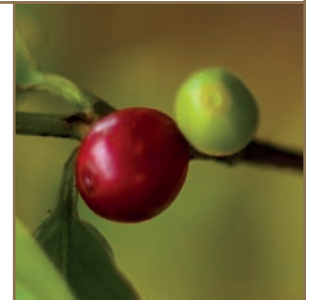
» **Vietnam:** Good news for iced-coffee lovers: Vietnam (the world's largest exporter of *robusta* beans) makes its java cold with sweetened condensed milk.



Farm to Cup

The next time you pick up a bag of whole or ground coffee, consider how far that little bean has come.

1. Derived from the Dutch word *koffie*, coffee comes from the seeds of a fruit that grows mainly on two strains (*arabica* and *robusta*) of the plant genus *Coffea*. Its origins have been traced to Ethiopia.



2. After picking, coffee beans are processed by one of two methods: washed (skins are removed and the mucilage is rinsed off) or unwashed (the fruit is dried and fermented in its skin before being cleaned).

3. Green coffee is sold to roasters and transformed into browned, toasted beans through a carefully controlled process, which determines unique flavor profiles.



4. The resulting roasted coffee beans are then ground and brewed into an energy-giving elixir.

» DID YOU KNOW?

Cupping: The practice of evaluating a brewed coffee's characteristics via smell and taste. Cupping involves quickly slurping from four cups, all containing the same roast, and spitting out the coffee in rapid succession. Cuppers look for consistency (one bad bean can throw off an entire cup), sweetness (tasting notes), body (mouthfeel), and acidity (high acid is a good thing) to determine the quality of green coffee.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: 1-3: EVAN GILMAN; 4: SHUTTERSTOCK; ILLUSTRATION: SHUTTERSTOCK

GET ROASTING

Eric Hashimoto



BY JENNA VALDESPINO

FOR COFFEE BEANS TO GET THEIR GLORIOUS TASTE AND MAGNIFICENT HUE, YOU NEED A CAREFUL BLEND OF ART, SCIENCE, AND HEAT—ALL OF WHICH MAKE FOR A FLAVORFUL BREW.

THE MASTER ROASTER

Emeryville's Highwire Coffee Roasters transforms green coffee into liquid energy thanks in no small part to Eric Hashimoto.

There's some debate as to whether roasting is more of an art or a science. When raw, green coffee is transformed into the rich, flavorful, brown beans we know and love, they're heated at extremely high temperatures and rotated in a drum before being cooled to perfection.

This process catalyzes a whole slew of chemical reactions (such as the escape of carbon dioxide and formation of melanoidin—a

compound that contributes to a bean's color), but it requires unquantifiable expertise from the roaster as well.

Highwire Coffee Roasters cofounder and roastmaster Eric Hashimoto respects the complex science of roasting, yet he also views the practice as an artisanal craft. "Sure, you can be a paint-by-numbers sort of roaster and follow roast profiles," he says. "But you really have to just do it, try it, see what happens over and over."

Hashimoto would know. He spent 14 years refining his roasting and cupping skills at Peet's, working with elite roastmasters to

evaluate each coffee's potential. Armed with that java know-how, Hashimoto joined forces with fellow Peet's alums Rich Avella and Robert Myers to launch Highwire in 2011.

The Emeryville-based team roasts four days a week, focusing on five qualities: flavor, aroma, acidity, body, and aftertaste. To achieve the right mix, roasters assess variables such as bean density and meticulously tweak roasting conditions including airflow and heat. From there, it's up to them to determine how the roast will run. After making intricately calculated preparations, roasters will often produce

dozens of sample batches to judge each roast.

"You need practice and patience to make the correlation between what you've done as a roaster and how it ultimately tastes in the cup," Hashimoto says.

Even with all that's involved from seed to sip, the industry veteran remains fixated on the end result. "Full development in the roaster leads to full expression in the cup," Hashimoto says. "It's kind of a mantra of mine. And ultimately, it goes back to the main goal of sharing a nice cup of coffee with friends and neighbors in the communities we serve." *highwirecoffee.com.*

» DID YOU KNOW?

Roasting cracks: During roasting, beans experience two audible "cracks" caused by the pressure of the beans expanding and losing moisture. Roasters must pay careful attention to these sounds, which affect the type of roast produced: Light roasts are typically ready soon after the first crack, while dark roasts aren't complete until after the second. And they happen only seconds apart!

Let There Be Light, Medium, or Dark

With all the different names and types of roasts, choosing a coffee can get confusing. Use this handy guide to help determine what you want in your cup.

Light



Common names: Cinnamon, Light City, Half City, New England

Tasting notes: Thanks to a shorter roasting time, light coffees retain much of the flavor and caffeine from their origin beans. Expect a sweet, vaguely fruity scent and acute acidity, with a generally mild taste. Body and tone are light, while the beans stay dry.

Roasting conditions: Limited time and less heat.

Caffeine level: Slightly higher (or more concentrated) than other roasts.

Medium



Common names: Regular, City, American, Breakfast

Tasting notes: The Goldilocks of roasts, medium beans offer a well-rounded, balanced flavor, aroma, and acidity, plus a slightly sweeter taste and more pronounced body than light roasts. This variety is common and well loved in the United States.

Roasting conditions: Midrange time and medium heat.

Caffeine level: Moderate.

Dark



Common names: Espresso, Full City, Italian, French

Tasting notes: Rich, bitter, bold—some dark coffees can jolt you awake by taste alone. But look closer and you'll find a full, flavorful body, sometimes with hints of chocolate and caramel. Original bean characteristics and natural acidity are lost to make way for the smoky, toasted, and buttery traits developed during roasting.

Roasting conditions: Longer time and more heat.

Caffeine level: Marginally lower (or less concentrated) than other roasts.

ILLUSTRATION: ROXANNE PASIBE

CAFÉ SOCIETY

Many boutique roasters also serve up a mean cup of joe. *Diablo* tracked down the best coffeehouses for a variety of experiences.

For coffee talk » States Coffee and Mercantile, Martinez
Blending vintage and modern since 2015, this downtown post office-turned-coffeehouse has become a hipster-approved favorite. statescoffee.com.

To snuggle a pup » Red Bay Coffee, Oakland
You can feel good about visiting industrial-chic Red Bay, where charcoal lattes and Africanos are served with a dash of economic empowerment and inclusivity. That inclusion even extends to canines: Say hi to resident pooch Greyson. redbaycoffee.com.

For sticking to your diet » Rooted Coffee Co., Pleasant Hill

The café may be small, but Rooted has a strong following thanks to years at the Walnut Creek farmers market. Swing by the brick-and-mortar location for organic coffee and dairy-free milks, plus paleo waffles. rootedcoffeeco.com.

To get your game on » Scarlet City Roasting and Espresso Bar, Emeryville

Trade Wi-Fi for sci-fi at Scarlet City, where co-owners Jen St. Hilaire and Susanna Handow have cultivated a space for fans of espresso, pinball, and all things *Star Trek*. scarletcityroasting.com.

To nerd out over coffee » Artis Coffee, Berkeley

Sure, you can take a coffee break at Artis, but you can also attend a brew demo or head to the slick live-roast bar to custom-roast your own java on the spot. www.artiscoffee.com.

To grab and go » Medleno Coffee Shop and Roastery, Danville

Medleno owners Ida Aguzarova and Igor Dzebissov craft small-batch classics and traditional Turkish coffee at this mini Danville café. medleno.com.

To score a free pour » Bicycle Coffee Co., Oakland

Bicycle offers organic coffee, casual communal spaces, and a one-of-a-kind special: Free Coffee Fridays, when the shop dishes out pour-overs and cold brews completely gratis all day to anyone who walks through the door. bicyclecoffeeco.com.

To work, work, work » Pacific Bay Coffee Co. and Micro-Roastery, Walnut Creek

Family-owned Pacific Bay has been grinding in Walnut Creek since 2004. Today, it operates out of a no-frills space ideal for getting some work done over fresh coffee and locally made pastries. pacificbaycoffee.com.

FILL'ER UP

Paul and Alana Halvorsen



BY LEEANNE JONES

» THAT FIRST SIP OF COFFEE CAN BE TRULY LIFE-CHANGING. DISCOVER THE MULTITUDE OF WAYS JAVA CAN BE BREWED AND SERVED TO ACCOMMODATE EVERYONE'S PREFERENCES.

THE CAFÉ CONNOISSEUR
Paul Halvorsen, of Story Coffee Co., has created a beautiful tale designed to be shared with the entire community.

If Story Coffee Co. were a literal story, it would be entering a triumphant third act. Started in 2016 as a crowd-funded cart at the Livermore farmers market, it morphed into a temporary pop-up inside the Bankhead Theater and tech incubator The Switch. It was slated to open its first brick-and-mortar home at the end of March.

“People kept asking, ‘Do you have a shop? Where is your

shop?’” owner Paul Halvorsen says of the customers who followed Story faithfully through every location and iteration.

“Story Coffee was built from the ground up, inch by inch, day by day,” says Halvorsen’s wife, Alana, of the shop’s strong communal base. And it certainly is mighty. Fans enthusiastically supported the café’s local partnerships by sipping Story Coffee stout at Altamont Beer Works, for example, and licking Story cold brew soft-serve at Meadowlark Dairy.

It’s the perfect time for a new indie coffee shop in Livermore: The city is booming with housing construction and a revitalized

downtown. Halvorsen—who worked as a Peet’s barista in college, fell in love with the craft and community of coffee, and went on to stints at Remedy in Oakland and Verve in Santa Cruz—says some of his patrons work in Silicon Valley or San Francisco and crave more elevated, urban-style epicurean experiences near home. “The excitement for us is finding a balance between really good coffee and being the delight in people’s days,” he notes.

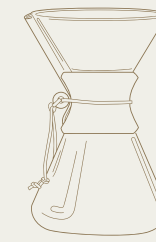
Halvorsen hopes to achieve that with a welcoming space and a menu that is fun, not fussy. The shop on Maple Street is small but

bright, with communal seating and a retail corner offering whole beans and drinkware. Story’s sweet and smooth flagship blend, Three Hills—roasted by San Francisco’s Saint Frank—is used in espresso drinks and as batch brew. Single-origin coffees feature seasonally on the bar and by the cup, and cold brew flows from a tap. The fan-favorite whiskey latte is a mainstay, as is oat milk. (Combined, the two make up a drink called the O.W.L.)

“We’re coffee people, but we’re also people people,” Halvorsen says. “Good coffee can be served in a lot of ways.” storycoffee.co.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

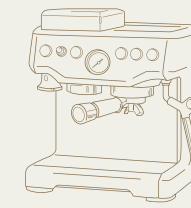
What’s the best way to brew coffee? It depends on your time and your taste. Here’s a breakdown of six popular methods.



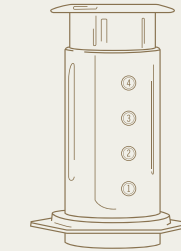
» **Chemex:** The hourglass-shaped flask is a popular choice for preparing the pour-over. Water is manually poured over ground coffee beans in intervals. Thick filters help yield a clear consistency and rich flavor. **Skill level:** Advanced. **Brew time:** 4 minutes.



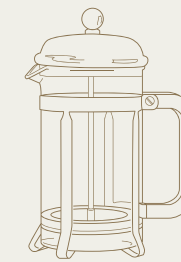
» **Moka pot:** For this stovetop espresso maker, steam pressure drives water from a bottom chamber up through coffee grounds to a top chamber. It yields an intense, strong flavor. **Skill level:** Beginner. **Brew time:** 5 minutes.



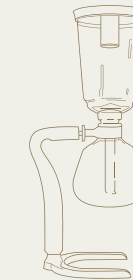
» **Espresso machine:** Pressurized hot water is pushed through packed grounds and a filter. An espresso shot is the most condensed, richest-tasting coffee available. **Skill level:** Intermediate/advanced. **Brew time:** 2 minutes.



» **Aeropress:** Great for traveling or camping, this device uses hand pressure to force hot water through grounds and filter. It produces a full-bodied coffee with a higher caffeine content than some other methods. **Skill level:** Beginner. **Brew time:** 3 minutes.



» **French press:** Grounds are steeped in hot water, and then a filtered plunger separates the drinkable coffee from the muddy grounds. The result is a little oily, with intense aroma and flavor. **Skill level:** Intermediate. **Brew time:** 10 minutes.



» **Siphon:** In this theatrical process, vapor pressure propels heated water up into a top chamber filled with coffee grounds. Then, vacuum pressure pulls it back down through a filter into the lower chamber. This coffee tastes clean and robust. **Skill level:** Advanced. **Brew time:** 6 minutes.

Now Pouring

It can be hard to decide what kind of coffee to order—especially when drink names are derived from Italian, Spanish, and French words. Check out this helpful explainer.

Americano

Espresso diluted by topping it with hot water. **Variation:** A long black is prepared in reverse (the espresso is poured into a small amount of water). Because the Americano uses more water, the long black tastes stronger.

Cappuccino

One-third espresso, one-third steamed milk, and one-third foam. **Variation:** The flat white is equal parts espresso and steamed milk—but little foam.

Cold Brew

Coffee that is brewed with cool water over a 12- to 24-hour period. **Variation:** Nitro is cold-brew coffee infused with nitrogen gas, creating a stout-like effect.

Cortado

An espresso paired with flat steamed milk. **Variation:** A *breve* is made with creamier half-and-half.

Latte

Steamed milk poured into espresso. **Variation:** Add cocoa powder or chocolate syrup to make a mocha—or incorporate another ingredient such as pumpkin spice or whiskey for a fun flavor twist.

» DID YOU KNOW?

Decaffeination: Decaf coffee gets a bad rap for its flavor, but roasters employ these decaffeination techniques to combat the stigma:

Solvent method: After being soaked in water to extract caffeine (and, in turn, flavor), unroasted beans are processed with either methylene chloride or natural ethyl acetate—which draw out all the buzz—before returning to the flavor-rich water to regain some of their taste.

Water processing: In this chemical-free method, unroasted beans are soaked in water to release caffeine. The now flavor-saturated water is run through a carbon or charcoal filter to remove the rest of the caffeine before new beans are dunked in. Because the water already contains so much flavor, the new beans retain their taste while still losing their caffeine. —J.V.