

From Mold to Mission: HOW HIKER COFFEE BREWED A CLEAN REVOLUTION

By **Kelly Ozog**

After years of mysterious illness, vertigo, and chronic inflammation, Addy and Zach finally discovered the hidden culprit - mold lurking in their home, their environment, and their morning cup of coffee. What began as a health crisis soon sparked a movement: a cleaner, mold-free coffee revolution.



THE WAKE-UP CALL

For years, Addy and Zach thought they were doing everything right. They were young, active, and health-conscious - always fueled by their morning coffee ritual. Having known each other since middle school and becoming high school sweethearts, the pair often started their outdoor adventures together over a shared cup. That love tradition would eventually evolve into an outdoor coffee brand. But by 2019, their bodies began sending signals that something was terribly wrong.

"It was like our bodies were trying to tell us something," says Addy. "But we didn't know how to listen - yet."

"We were living in an apartment with a moldy HVAC unit blowing air right into our space," Zach recalls. "Addy was getting sick and couldn't eat without swelling up. She had autoimmune and gut issues that would put her out for days. When I started having vertigo so bad I couldn't stand up and my world was spinning, we knew it was time to get help."

They eventually turned to a holistic practitioner who uncovered the truth: both had severe mold toxicity from multiple strains and autoimmune reactions triggered by environmental exposure - and, shockingly, from their coffee, too.

"Once we realized how mold exposure impacts inflammation and histamines," Addy and Zach explain, "we started to notice that moldy coffee made everything worse - and instantly! With a moldy cup of coffee, we get gut issues, bladder irritation, heart palpitations, headaches, adrenal fatigue, and heartburn."

THE BREAKING POINT

During recovery, Addy's world shrank to just 10 foods she could tolerate.

"I couldn't eat leftovers, couldn't touch seed oils, and every meal had to be made fresh," she says. "It felt like living in survival mode, and I was under so much stress that my body kept producing even more histamines."

Instead of giving up, they started questioning everything - their home, their habits, and even the products they once believed were "healthy" and "safe." That's when the couple decided to overhaul everything they could control: their diet, their environment, and, eventually, their business.

THE TURNING POINT: BREWING SOMETHING BETTER

Their first roasting experiments were humble - just two people on a mission to make coffee they could actually tolerate. But the vision grew quickly. "We started Hiker Coffee in 2016 because we loved the outdoors," says Zach. "But after mold toxicity, it became more than just adventure - it became more about making something that wouldn't make people sick." They began sending every batch of beans to third-party labs for testing, screening for mycotoxins, heavy metals, and pesticides. They soon learned that roasting doesn't destroy mold toxins and that even "organic" coffee can be contaminated.

"Just because it's USDA Organic doesn't mean it's clean," Addy explains. "Certifiers can't always be on the farms, and mycotoxins are heat-resistant. So we test everything." Today, Hiker Coffee partners directly with co-ops in Peru, Colombia, Mexico, and Honduras, sourcing only washed, organic beans with the lowest risk of mold growth.

CLEAN BEANS, CLEAN CONSCIENCE

After years of detoxing from mold toxicity, Addy and Zach embraced an entirely gluten-free, dairy-free, and seed-oil-free lifestyle. They learned that contamination isn't just a coffee problem - it's everywhere. So, they started with what they loved most: coffee.

Working closely with experts, they implemented strict mold-prevention protocols and lab-tested every roast for mold, pesticides, and heavy metals.

Each Hiker Coffee roast meets the European safety standard of less than 3 parts per billion of mycotoxins - though most batches test at zero. Their café uses only organic, local ingredients that are 100% gluten-free and seed-oil-free, with a completely scratch-made menu. "We follow the strictest global standards for our coffee," says Zach. "We're proud to share our lab results because people deserve to know what's in their cup. We even make our own coconut milk and syrups in-house."

They've also committed to compostable packaging, seed-oil-free flavorings, and organic, real ingredients - no shortcuts or synthetic "natural flavors."

"When you have autoimmune issues or mold illness, even small toxins add up," Addy says. "We only use real spices and MCT oil in our flavored blends - it's anti-inflammatory and gentle on digestion."

THE HEALING JOURNEY

Beyond business, their recovery required a complete 180° lifestyle change.

"No more fragrances, plastics, or harsh chemicals," says Addy. "We had to detox every part of our lives - what we touched, ate, breathed, and drank."

The shift was life-changing. "You can feel it within hours," Zach says. "If I drink moldy coffee now, I know instantly - my bladder aches, my heart races. But clean coffee like ours, it's energy without the crash or inflammation with no jitters."

Their recovery journey inspired the creation of Hiker Café, a 100% gluten-free, seed-oil-free, mold-free, vegan café serving organic meals and scratch-made lattes. Even the space itself was built with wellness in mind.

"When we bought our warehouse, we found leaks and had to start from scratch," says Addy. "We sealed everything, installed dehumidifiers, and checked every window and sink. The little things matter." Customers immediately notice the difference. "People come in and say, 'I finally feel safe eating here,'" Addy says. "That's the best reward."

BEYOND THE CUP

Today, Hiker Coffee has grown into a wellness-driven brand with a community of clean-living adventurers.

"We've learned that health and happiness start with what you consume," says Zach. "For us, coffee became a symbol of resilience - a reminder that healing can begin with something as simple as your morning ritual."

Looking ahead, the couple plans to expand into more toxin-free products and to educate about what "clean" truly means. "Everyone deserves to feel good after their coffee," Addy says. "To us, 'clean' isn't a buzzword - it's a way of life. It's about feeling safe, nourished, and alive - one sip at a time."

Learn more at www.hiker.coffee.

As always, consult a medical professional before beginning any new protocol.

