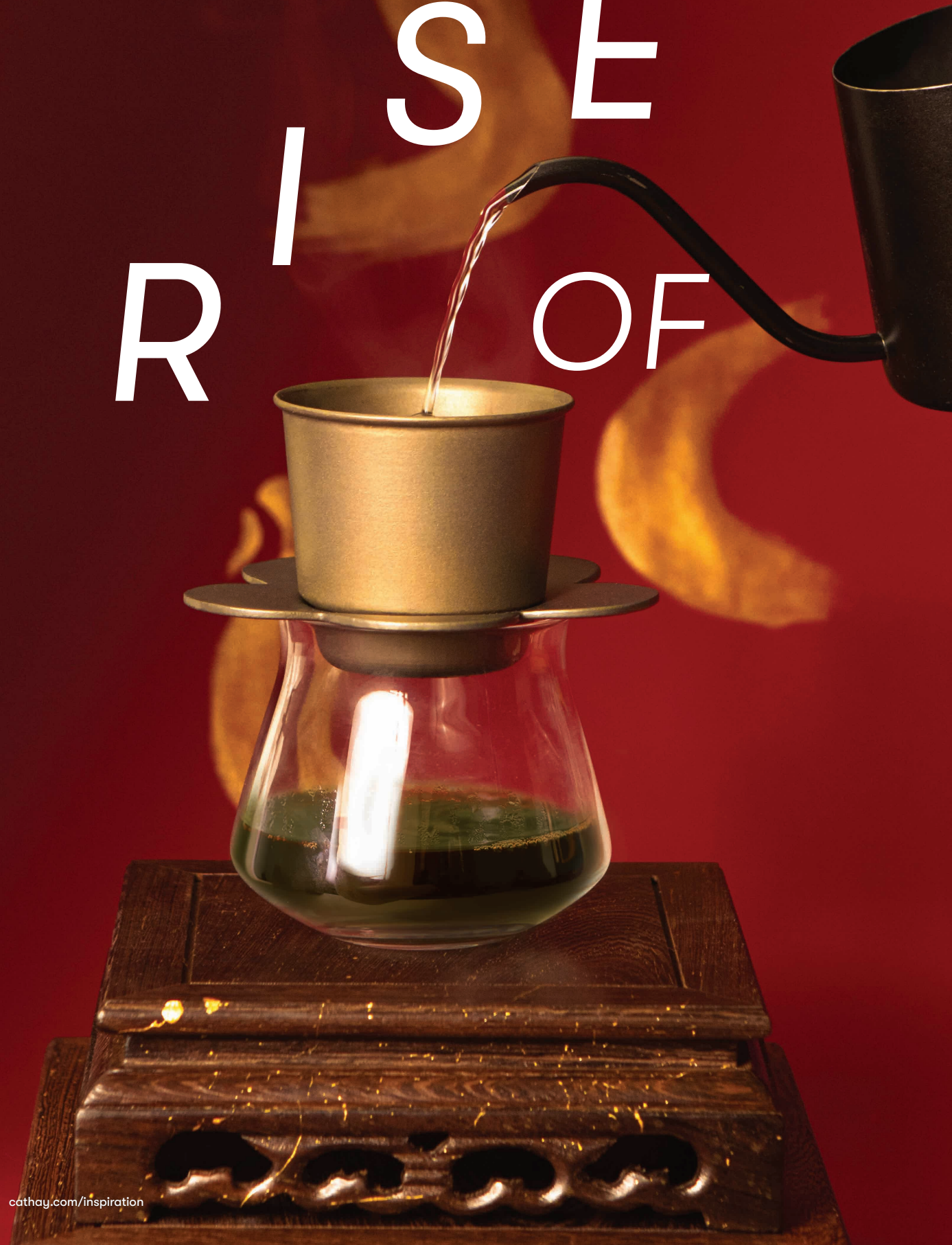


R I S E O F



IN VIETNAM, A COFFEE REFORMATION IS BREWING

BY JOSH ZUKAS

ROBUSTA

羅布斯塔崛起

越南正在「泡」製一股咖啡新浪潮 撰文 JOSH ZUKAS



Photos: Courtesy/imagines

On a misty spring morning on Hanoi's Van Mieu Street, a typical scene takes shape. A monk in mustard robes steps out of an SUV and puzzles over how to pay for parking. A pyjama-clad saleswoman peddles earbuds to bemused tourists. Athletic youths wrestle an antique wooden carving down an alleyway. This all plays out in front of the Temple of Literature, a century-old centre of learning distinguished by its curved-roof pavilions and stately centenarian trees.

The historic site and tableau unfolding before it all are best enjoyed from a window stool at Refined Specialty Coffee. At first glance, the bucolic, light-filled temple and the moody, low-lit, black-painted coffee bar have little in common. On deeper reflection, both channel a distinctly local character. "I love the peace of the space," says Vu Dinh Tu, who opened the coffee bar in 2020. "It fits my style."

Refined is known for Vietnamese drip filter coffees, including the humble *nau* (with condensed milk) and the playful *gia dua* (with coconut). More importantly, Refined specialises in selecting, roasting and brewing premium homegrown Robusta beans, as opposed to imported Arabica. "Everyone talks about Arabica," says Vu, "but we have amazing Robusta in Vietnam, and it suits our palate."

While baristas prize Arabica for its smooth, bright notes that suit espresso-based drinks like a flat white, they generally regard Robusta as too bitter. This quality is one reason Vietnamese coffees pair well with sugar or condensed milk: sweetness tempers the bean's bold, earthy flavour.

The French introduced Arabica to Vietnam in the mid-1800s, but a century later, it was clear that Robusta grew better in the country's warm, wet highland climates. By the 1990s, economic reforms powered mass Robusta production, making Vietnam the world's second-largest coffee producer today. However, as Vietnam's status as an exporter grew, Robusta's reputation declined, largely because most of it was industrially grown, ultra-processed and reserved for cheap instant coffee.

But a new epoch is brewing. "For 20 or 30 years, Vietnam focused on quantity. Now we're finally focusing on quality. If we grow properly, harvest properly and dry properly, the quality changes completely," says Vu.

For Vu, business is the proof that the new brew is working. "At first, when I told customers I was serving Robusta, they walked out. So I changed my strategy: I let them taste the coffee first. After they said it was good, only then did I tell them it was Robusta." ▶▶

Opening spread, from left: the subtle art of Vietnamese drip coffee; Vu Dinh Tu at Refined Specialty Coffee, where Robusta is championed

開版跨頁左圖起：越南滴漏咖啡的細膩藝術；Vu Dinh Tu於主打羅布斯塔咖啡的Refined Specialty Coffee



河內文廟街春日清晨，薄霧瀰漫，眼前一幕尋常不過的城市風景。穿著赭黃色袈裟的僧人從運動型多功能車下來，困惑地研究如何支付咪錶費；身穿睡衣的女售貨員向一臉茫然的遊客推銷耳機；數名體格健碩的年輕人合力地把一件古董木雕搬出小巷。這些尋常生活就在百年學府國子監前發生，其翹起的屋簷亭閣與氣勢恢宏的百年古樹至今仍屹立不變。

從精品咖啡店Refined的靠窗座位向外觀看，便可盡覽這個歷史古蹟及當中的眾生相。沐浴在自然光中的恬靜文廟，與這間以黑色為主調、燈光低調而氛圍濃厚的咖啡店，似乎毫無共通之處；但只要細看，兩者卻同樣流露出濃厚的在地氣息。於2020年創辦咖啡店的Vu Dinh Tu表示：「我很喜歡這個空間的平和氣氛，正好切合我的風格。」

Refined以越南滴漏咖啡而聞名，包括經典的煉奶咖啡 (*nau*)，以及新奇的椰子咖啡 (*gia dua*)。更重要是 Refined 專長挑選、烘焙及沖煮優質的本地羅布斯塔咖啡，而非進口的阿拉比卡咖啡豆。「人們都在談論阿拉比卡，但越南其實有很優秀的羅布斯塔，而且更合乎我們的口味。」Vu 說道。

咖啡師偏愛阿拉比卡的順滑和鮮明風味，特別適合做 flat white 等意式濃縮咖啡，而羅布斯塔則被指過於苦澀。這種特性亦解釋了為何越南咖啡常配搭砂糖或煉奶享用，以甜味中和咖啡豆濃烈而帶有泥土氣息的風味。

19世紀中葉，法國人將阿拉比卡引入越南，但一個世紀以後，人們發現當地溫暖潮濕的高原氣候，反而最適合種植羅布斯塔。到了1990年代，經濟改革推動羅布斯塔的大規模生產，促使越南成為當今全球第二大咖啡生產國。不過，隨著越南作為出口國的地位日益提升，羅布斯塔的聲譽卻日漸下滑，主要原因在於大部分豆種以工業化方式種植、經高度加工，並多用於生產廉價的即溶咖啡。

然而，一個新時代正在醞釀中。Vu指：「過去二、三十年，越南只追求產量，現在我們終於把焦點放回品質。如果種植和採收得宜，乾燥處理到位，質量便會截然不同。」

Vu認為出色業績證明這股新浪潮奏效。「起初，當我告訴客人店舖呈奉羅布斯塔咖啡時，他們會轉身離開。於是我改變策略，先讓他們試飲，待他們給予好評後，我才直言這其實是羅布斯塔。」▶▶



Clockwise from left: cocktails and a Vietnamese snack served at Lacaph Coffee Experiences Space in Hanoi; Vietnamese egg coffee; a coffee-making workshop at Lacaph Coffee Experiences Space

左圖起順時針：在河內Lacaph Coffee Experiences Space 享用雞尾酒及越南小食；越南蛋咖啡；於Lacaph Coffee Experiences Space舉行的咖啡沖煮工作坊



Photos: Courtesy Images



LACÀPH CELEBRATES VIETNAMESE SPECIALITY COFFEE MADE WITH ROBUSTA

Lacàph致力推廣以羅布斯塔咖啡豆製成的越南特色咖啡

ELEVATING AND EDUCATING

The area around Ben Thanh Market in Ho Chi Minh City's French Quarter was a trading hub for centuries before the current market hall was constructed in the 1910s. Today it overlooks one of the liveliest intersections in the city, buzzing with both traffic and human activity. A courier on a motorbike balances deliveries between his knees while shouting orders to a streetside food vendor. Nearby, tourists huddle beneath the shade of the market's clock tower. Providing a contrast to the chaos, while still channelling the neighbourhood's heritage, is Lacàph Coffee Experiences Space, on the upper floors of a French terraced house just a few streets away. Like Refined, it celebrates Vietnamese speciality coffee made with Robusta, including *ca phe trung* (egg coffee) and *ca phe muoi* (salted coffee). Lacàph also organises workshops where visitors learn how these drinks are made.

品味升級

位於胡志明市法國區的濱城市場一帶，現今大樓於1910年代建成之前，已是延續多個世紀的商貿樞紐。如今，這裡仍然是市內最生機蓬勃的交叉點，車水馬龍，人潮熙來攘往。電單車速遞員一邊把包裹夾在雙膝之間，一邊高聲向街邊食品攤販點餐；四周的遊客則紛紛擠在鐘樓的陰影下歇息。距離這片喧囂數條街外，一幢法式排屋樓上卻是另一番景象。Lacàph Coffee Experiences Space氣氛截然不同，卻同樣承載著這個社區的歷史底蘊。跟Refined相若，主打以羅布斯塔豆沖泡的越南精品咖啡，包括蛋咖啡(*ca phe trung*)和鹽咖啡(*ca phe muoi*)。Lacàph亦設有工作坊，讓訪客親身了解這些咖啡的製作過程。Lacàph於2020年由Timen Swijtink創立，跟Vu一樣，他也曾遇上不少質疑。這位荷蘭人將越南當前的咖啡產業比作90年代末期的南非洲葡萄酒產業：「這是一個新興地區，必須以更淺顯易懂的方式向外界介紹其產品。」

Timen Swijtink founded Lacàph in 2020, and much like Vu, has encountered scepticism. The Dutchman likens Vietnam's current coffee scene to South Africa's wine industry in the late-'90s: "It's an emerging region that has to explain its products in a more accessible way."

To broaden the conversation, this July, Swijtink is launching Farm Coffee Bar, a reservation-only space that celebrates premium Vietnamese Robusta. Each serving will come with detailed information about the beans' origin, the farmers who grew them and how they were processed. "We're bringing coffee back to the farm and reconnecting the cup to its origin," he says.

GOING GLOBAL

Vu and Swijtink have both launched ventures that are carrying Vietnam's coffee culture beyond the country's borders. In 2024, Vu created Phinoi, a line of Vietnamese filters that pair improved functionality with a playful, contemporary look. And last year, Swijtink debuted Bold84, a premium, all-natural canned coffee that is already a two-time World Taste Award winner.

Both products are now available across Asia and the US, a sign that Vietnam is exporting not just its beans but also its ideas, innovations – and identity. ●

Opposite, clockwise from top left: a typical Hanoi street scene; an enticing coconut coffee; the playful designs of Bold84's canned coffee series. Below: one of Phinoi's contemporary Vietnamese coffee filters

對頁左上圖起順時針：典型的河內街頭景象；令人垂涎的椰子咖啡；Bold84罐裝咖啡系列的玩味設計。下圖：Phinoi其中一款現代感十足的越南咖啡濾具

Photos: Left: trangiap/Getty Images; sipark/Getty Images. Others: Courtesy Images



為了擴闊討論，Swijtink將於今年7月開設只接受預約的Farm Coffee Bar，聚焦優質的越南羅布斯塔咖啡。每杯咖啡都會附上詳細資料，說明豆的來源、農民背景和處理方法。他說：「我們把咖啡回歸農場，重新將杯中物連結到其源頭。」

邁向國際

Vu和Swijtink均以創新產品，致力把越南咖啡文化推展到海外。Vu於2024年推出一系列越南咖啡濾杯Phinoi，兼具更高功能性與富當代玩味設計。Swijtink則在去年首推全天然泡製的優質罐裝咖啡Bold84，已兩度贏得World Taste Award。

目前兩款產品已在亞洲與美國上架，象徵越南輸出的不僅是咖啡豆，更包括其理念、創新精神，以及文化身份。●

TRY A CUP ON YOUR NEXT TRIP 下趟旅程來一杯咖啡

REFINED

The café has three locations in Hanoi: 咖啡店在河內共有三家分店：

43 Van Mieu
17 Nha Tho
Nha 2 Ngo 57 Lang Ha
refined.vn

LACÀPH COFFEE

220 Nguyen Cong Tru, Ho Chi Minh City
lacaph.coffee

BOLD84

Beans and canned coffee can be bought at Lacàph or via online retailers such as Amazon 可於Lacàph選購咖啡豆及罐裝咖啡，或透過Amazon等網上零售商訂購
bold84.coffee



GO FURTHER 盡情體驗

Learn how to make the best cup of coffee at home 學習如何在家沖煮一杯最完美的咖啡

