

THE ART OF COFFEE

Third Wave Coffee has brought us better quality beans, highly skilled brewers and the joy of latte art. **Iii Saanen** drops in at five of Tokyo's top artisanal coffee shops



We say Tokyo, you say... good coffee? Once considered a virtual dark roast wasteland, our metropolis has seen the so-called Third Wave coffee movement sweep over the city with force since 2010 or so, with dozens of excellent speciality shops opening and the recognition of coffee as a craft spreading like wildfire. Single-origin beans are widely available, small roasters are gaining ground, and more and more café owners are getting used to manoeuvring high-tech espresso machines. Follow us on a tour of some of the city's finest joints, including one golden oldie that tenaciously kept the flag flying for good coffee long before anyone had even thought it could become trendy.

CAFÉ DE L'AMBRE

A true Ginza classic, Café de l'Ambre has been in business since 1948 and exudes

a quirky retro vibe: the coffee is prepared behind a wide bar counter, manned by three or more focused-looking craftsmen, the lighting is pleasantly subtle, and the worn-down interior makes for a striking contrast with the glittering boutiques along nearby Chuo-dori. Centenarian owner Ichiro Sekiguchi is no longer seen around the shop much but his attention to detail lives on, along with the vintage bean selection that includes a batch harvested in Colombia way back in 1954. For a less extreme but equally aromatic alternative, try the soft Tanzanian dark roast. Accurate English-language menus are available. **8-10-15 Ginza, Chuo. 12pm-10pm Mon-Sat, 12pm-7pm Sun & hols. 03 3571 1551. h6.dion.ne.jp/~lambre/ (Japanese only).**

AMAMERIA ESPRESSO

Located on the ground floor of an apartment building close to Musashi-Koyama Station, some way off the beaten track, certified cupping



judge Toshiaki Ishii's stylish neighbourhood shop merits a trip all by itself. Choose from around half a dozen single-origin beans for your AeroPressed cup of Joe – far from a vanity stunt, the method actually does make a difference for bringing out the full aroma of the beans. We also like their impeccably friendly service and the chill atmosphere enjoyed by everyone from local hipsters to senior citizens, as well as the fact that Amameria upholds a strict non-smoking policy.

Keep your eyes open for seasonal specials: on our summer visit, the slot was filled by coffee kakigori (shaved ice) topped with fresh orange. **3-6-15 Koyama, Shinagawa. 12pm-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat-Sun & hols. 03 6426 9148. amameria.com (Japanese only).**



OBSCURA COFFEE ROASTERS

Operating a roastery and two shops in Sangenjaya, Obscura's wide variety of outside ventures makes this ambitious company one of the major players on Tokyo's speciality coffee scene. They've been steadily expanding their reach since starting out in 2009, and now deliver beans to top hotels, organise markets for the benefit of the local community and keep the artsy types well caffeinated at Roppongi's newly opened photography mecca, Ima Concept Store. Their two dedicated shops also serve different purposes: the quiet and homely Cafe, a place that's designed to kindly nudge heretics onto the righteous path of Joe, stays



open until 11pm and offers only siphon coffee, while the stylish and take-out focused Laboratory targets true believers with espresso and hand-drip varieties. Both places also have small but strictly curated selections of sweets to go with your drink. **Cafe: 1-9-16 Sangenjaya, Setagaya. 12pm-11pm daily, closed on the 3rd Wed of every month. 03 3795 6027. Laboratory: 4-28-9 Taishido, Setagaya. 9am-8pm daily, closed**



on the 3rd Wed of every month. 03 5432 9809. www.cafe-obscura.com (Japanese only).

NOZY COFFEE

In the words of owner Masataka Nojo, Nozy aims to introduce customers to everything that goes into the craft coffee 'lifestyle'. Very close attention to detail, a relaxed, brightly lit space and excellent espressos are the main draws at their two-storey shop, located right by Setagaya Park – a brisk 15-minute walk from the nearest station (Yutenji). Single-origin beans are the name of the game, with around six varieties available at all times for both sipping and

buying. This home base is perfect if you've got all afternoon to spend on the wonders of coffee, whereas Nozy's Roastery, a cooperative venture with craft beer brewers T.Y. Harbor, on Cat Street in Harajuku, is the place to go for both a quick sip and a



complete urban dining experience. **Nozy Coffee: 2-29-7 Shimouma, Setagaya. 11am-7pm daily. 03 5787 8748. www.nozycoffee.jp (Japanese only). The Roastery: 5-17-13 Jingumae, Shibuya. 8am-8pm daily. 03 6450 5755. www.tyharborbrewing.co.jp/en/roastery/.**

COUTUME AOYAMA

After kicking off something of a revolution in the Paris coffee scene a couple of years ago, Coutume landed in Tokyo in April 2014 and has since wowed Aoyamans with beans imported directly from a handful of farmers and top-shelf

brews perfected with a handsome Steampunk machine. Their Tokyo outpost's minimalist interior, Nordic designer tableware and available reading materials are as trendy as the clientele, but the atmosphere remains far from stuffy: in fact, with nonchalant but friendly staff, some of the best sandwiches in Tokyo and free wi-fi, this is one of the more comfy specialist shops out there. Unlike most of the competition, Coutume also opens early enough for you to get your morning fix before heading to the office. **5-8-10 Minami-Aoyama, Minato. 7.30am-9.30pm daily. 03 6418 5325. coutume.jp.**



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