

Coffee, Tea & Alcohol: Bringing the Crafts Together

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It may seem like an unnatural relationship, but as the artisanal aspects of coffee, tea and alcohol continue to evolve, so do the opportunities to bring the products together to create new items and incremental revenues.

At first glance, coffee, tea and alcohol, may seem to be completely different products. However, the journey of these three items have taken very similar paths. An increasing number of consumers have developed refined palates and are actively seeking beverages that were developed by artisans. They are seeking a full sensory experience paying attention to the aroma, taste notes and colour of the liquor. It seems natural that the crafts have come together to offer consumers a fully immersive experience.

In the early stages of craft brewing, said food engineer Jonathan Zangwell, beer was produced more as a commodity than for the craft. Today, however, the craft beer industry mirrors what has happened to the speciality coffee industry. Master brewers are focused on creating high quality products, bringing together the art and science of cultivating a great beer.

With an extensive experience in brewing and an accelerated education in coffee, Zangwell – the founder, brewmaster and master roaster at Stolen Sun Brewing Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania –decided to bring beer and coffee under one roof. “I wanted to create an environment that focused on the bean and the beer individual,” said Zangwell. “It is not about mixing coffee and beer, but bringing together the cultures of the two products.” Zangwell’s goal is to increase awareness of the two products, highlighting both the way that the product is processed and the similar tasting notes.

Stolen Sun is not the only company recognizing the similarities between the two crafts. In fact, breweries are actively seeking out roasters to help them develop the right coffee profile for their beer.

Paying Attention to the Nuances

Press Coffee, Phoenix, Arizona has been roasting coffee since 2010, with over 75 wholesale accounts in the food and hospitality industry. The first brewery they began working with was Wren House Brewing, also based in Phoenix, which currently uses Press Coffee’s cold brew in their Jomax Oatmeal Stout. “Wren House Brewing was looking for both the beans and a cold brew product to pair with their beer,” said Alex Mason, partner, general manager, Press Coffee. “They wanted traditional coffee notes, chocolate, bigger body, and lower acidity.” Wren House Brewing opted to prepare their chosen coffee as a cold brew, as its lower acidity tended to work well with beer. Since that initial beverage, Press Coffee has worked with Osho Brewing, to create a cold brew for their Morning Brew, a blond ale.

Casey Hughes, brewmaster at Coppertail Brewing Company, Tampa, Florida, shared that it was the concept of adding coffee to beer that inspired him to take his first sip of coffee. “I never drank coffee until I had it in beer,” said Hughes. “It wasn’t until I had a cupping with a roaster that I discovered the nuances in quality coffee.”

Balancing the flavours of coffee with a pale ale can be extremely challenging. To find the right flavour profile, Coppertail Brewing Company cupped several types of coffee. “The first coffee we tried had neat potential and tasted great but came out too fruity,” said Hughes. “With a lighter beer, you want the toasty kind of aroma there, just so you know that there is coffee in there.” The final product was crafted by infusing the whole beans directly in the tank with the beer. This process infused the beer with the coffee aroma without altering the colour of the pale ale.

Flavour of Stout Enhanced by Coffee

Stouts, on the other hand, seem to naturally lend themselves to the rich flavours of coffee and chocolate. In fact, one of the first recipes that Galen Smith, head brewer,



Lonerider Brewing Company, Raleigh, North Carolina, helped develop was Pistols at Dawn, a coffee stout. The goal was to create a breakfast-style stout, and to get there, Smith said, they tried a few different processes, culminating with adding lactose, oats, chocolate, and cold brew from Counter Culture, to the stout.

When Rhode Island icon, Narragansett Beer decided that they wanted to do a beer and coffee collaboration, they wanted to ensure that they had a partnership that both embodied the right flavour and brand. “We decided on Autocrat coffee, since their coffee milk is the official beverage of Rhode Island,” said Mark Hellendrung, CEO, Narragansett Beer. To create the stout, Hellendrung went to Autocrat directly and shared his vision of creating a coffee milk stout. The two companies brought their research and development teams together to create a coffee extract. The stout was released in November, just in time for the holiday season. This year’s marketing campaign played on the idea of having breakfast for dinner, highlighting the fact that the stout contains coffee.

Taking Tea to the Next Level

One company that has brought together beer- and tea-inspired products, is Firepot Nomadic Teas, Nashville, Tennessee. Founder, Sarah Scarborough, is constantly exploring new ways to experience tea from culinary delights to beverages. “My brain wanders around tea and cooking all of the time, and one day, I thought, we should do a beer and chai,” said Scarborough. “So, I brought my masala to a local brewery, Jackalope Brewing Company.” The brewery took their amber beer, Bear Walker and infused it with Firepot’s chai spices, and the result was Chai Walker, an autumn chai beer. Although the product is chai inspired, it does not contain any black tea, as the tannins in *Camellia sinensis* could result in bitter notes.

Understanding the flavour profile of the core product is essential, particularly when companies are looking to infuse a new flavour. “Historically, coffee works well with beer, tisanes work well with ciders and meads,” said Ricky Klein, brewmaster, Groennfell Meadery, Colchester, Vermont. The fact that Kelly Klein, CEO, Groennfell Meadery, has an extensive tea background has greatly assisted with identifying how tisanes could be used to develop innovative alcoholic products.

Currently, Groennfell Meadery has two tisane-based products, Autumn Spice, which features a chamomile tea from Adagio Tea and Buckland Mead, which brings together, lemon, green roibos, and honey. For the Buckland Mead, Klein initially tried using green tea, but the result was very bitter. Tea can be particularly challenging to work with, he shared, but despite this, Klein continues to experiment, with hopes of being able to release a product featuring lapsang souchong in the future.



Brass Rings Spirit Brands, Hilton Head, South Carolina prides itself in delivering an artisanal craft spirit. The idea of enhancing rum with espresso came about when distiller Pete Thompson from Hilton Head Distillery was having lunch at a local spot, Java Burrito. Although he wasn't a coffee drinker, he was intrigued by a mocha espresso milkshake that was on the menu. "We felt that there was a gap in the coffee purist market, and nobody was really speaking to that audience. So that is something that we wanted to do," said Joe Fenten, president and COO,

Brass Rings Spirit Brands.

Their goal was to create a coffee liquor for the coffee purists. To do so, they focused on the raw materials ensuring that they had the right coffee for their product so they decided on Blue Mountain coffee. "The story of the Blue Mountain coffee tied well with our brand and our brand messaging," said Fenten. "When we tested the maceration of the beans, it was a big win."

To create the product, the coffee beans are placed in a steeping bag, and soaked and steeped in highly concentrated alcohol at an ambient temperature. Since the beans are hand steeped, each batch of Mountain Peak Espresso Rum is subtly different, but the espresso is kept as consistent as possible.

Distilleries Offer New Product Potential

For some companies, it's not about a merging, but about crafting a roast of coffee that complements their line of alcohol products. This was the case for Jack Daniels, which was looking to add a line of coffee to their offerings. "Jack Daniels actively sought us out as they had liked another of our products, called Maison Camus Coffee, which is a coffee that we created for a cognac coffee," said Jackie Newman, vice president, World of Coffee. "The coffee line does not contain any liquor but it's a brand extension for them."

World of Coffee, Sterling, New Jersey, became a licensee of Jack Daniels, which provided them with control of over the creation of the roast, including selling the product. To get to the final product, they were provided with a set of guidelines from Jack Daniels, with the primary focus being to create a high-end product that was authentic to the brand. The beans are infused with Jack Daniel's Old No 7 Tennessee Whiskey providing both caramel and vanilla notes to the coffee. "It's been a great process for us, we are a small family-owned business and this licensing opportunity, as well as being a fun product to work on, has really helped us grow our business," said Newman.

As the crafts of alcohol, coffee and tea continue to evolve, so do the opportunities to bring the three products together. Still in its infancy, these relationships will not only



result in new products but increased awareness on how the notes in coffee, tea and tisanes can be used to enhance alcoholic beverages. “We all kind of roll out the in same circles, we all like better food, better coffee and better beer,” said Hughes. “Bringing the crafts together is a completely natural relationship.”

<http://www.teaandcoffee.net/18986/features/coffee-tea-alcohol-bringing-crafts-together/>

