

the third wave of coffee



The First Wave of coffee is generally considered the initial proliferation of coffee, after World War II, with new *freeze-dried coffee* flooding the marketplace.

The Second Wave was a result of Peets Coffee's, Alfred Peet's, introduction of dark-roast coffees, and 30 years later, the global Starbucksification of darker coffees - large chains of "gourmet" coffee shops, home espresso machines and the shift from robusta to arabica coffee beans. All these factors helped improve coffee quality. The popularization of "gourmet coffee" helped acquaint millions of people with mochas and lattes.

Trish Skeie, from Taylor Maid Farms Organic Coffee & Tea, coined the phrase "Third Wave". "The third wave is about taking coffee to the next level," says Gwilym Davies, Britain's best barista "It's all very uncorporate, and passionate about freshness and the sourcing of coffee beans." ¹

He talks with the passion of a sommelier discussing a good wine when he explains why his coffee is so good. Here are Davis' tips for making the best cappuccino:

- Know where your beans come from.
- Freshness. Know when the coffee was roasted. Three weeks is optimum.
- Favour a burr grinder, not one of those helicopter blades because they don't grind evenly.
- Get a good-quality machine with a stable temperature.
- Keep the frothing wand clean. Overheated milk loses its sweetness.



Nicholas Cho of Murky Coffee in Washington, DC says that the Third Wave is about *letting the coffee speak for itself*. "During the first two waves, we appreciated coffee for what it gave us: caffeine, a hot beverage to sip and enjoy a conversation over, a drink to modify with sweetener, dairy (or non-dairy) creamers, syrups, whipped cream, etc. The Third Wave is about *enjoying the coffee for what it is*."

Cho goes on to say, "Coffee is a crop, that cannot forever be marketed, sold, and purchased the way it is today. To paraphrase Mark Prince's article "if wine was sold the way coffee is usually sold today, you'd go to a store and see a row of five to twelve bottles, with labels that say, "FRENCH WINE," "AMERICAN WINE," "ITALIAN WINE," "AUSTRALIAN WINE," etc. No vineyard or winery name, no vintage year, no nothing. Just country of origin, and that's it."

"The best coffees in the world, indeed much like wine, have inherent characteristics that dictate how they should be marketed and sold. We need to be able to walk into a store and see coffee with 'roasted-on' dating. The labels should not only give us the country of origin and degree of roast, but the actual farm or estate that it comes from. On top of that, when a particular lot of green coffee has been exhausted and a new one comes in to the roaster, the information and descriptions should be updated to reflect the new coffee."

"Rather than roasting to achieve a pre-determined 'flavor profile' year after year, believing that consistency is above all else the ultimate goal when blending and roasting for espresso (that's second-wave thinking) - with each new lot of green beans, the roaster is given a new palette of coffees to work with, and learning how to work with that palette - that's Third Wave!" ²

¹ Stuart Jeffries The Guardian, Monday 16 March 2009

² Nicholas Cho is the owner of murky coffee in Washington, DC.