



The aroma of achievement

On-site roasting builds revenue and reputation

BY LAWRENCE HERZOG

Jim Townley smells success every time he roasts a new batch of coffee. The co-owner of Fresh Cup, with two locations on southern Vancouver Island, has been roasting on site for more than a decade. His patented and environmentally friendly Roastaire system was one of the big hits at the Canadian Coffee & Tea Show in Toronto last September.

Townley hauled the roaster across Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and most of Ontario to show it off at the show. His seminar detailing how on-site roasting can build revenue and reputation was met with enthusiastic response from participants. “On-site roasting gives small coffeehouses an opportunity to roast small batches and maintain tight control on their freshness. This micro-roasting technology can put out 180 pounds a day, and it changes the way your customers will view your coffeehouse.”

In the same way that brew pubs changed the bar business, Townley believes on-site roasters have the potential to shift the value proposition for coffeehouses. “Coffee is the great Canadian handshake,” he says, and by making a roastery the hub for coffee operations, savvy entrepreneurs can create a buzz in their core product.

“Freshness and quality drive traffic. You want your customers to come through your door because your coffee tastes better, is fresher, and is a better experience. You want them to come back again and again so that you grab market

share from your competitors. It’s all about differentiation, new customer acquisition, and retention of existing ones.”

When Fresh Cup opened their Sidney, BC location, the community of 6,000 people was already home to six coffeehouses. “My goal was to take 15 percent of their customers, and I wanted their best, most discerning customers who were willing to pay a little more for better coffee,” Townley says.

Roasting on site generates new revenue streams, he explains. The “theatre of roasting,” as he calls it, nurtures a connection to the consumer. “People believe what they see, smell and taste. Most have never seen coffee being roasted before, and if you are the first person to introduce them to it, you have a better chance of keeping them as a long-term customer.”

Bringing in different beans to roast provides variety and an opportunity for special events (like a “Kenya Night”) and generates excitement for the baristas and other staff. Loyal liquid customers are more likely to become loyal bean customers, Townley says. His Sidney location now sells more than \$10,000 a month of whole

bean coffee. On-site roasting comes with its own set of challenges, including emissions of VOCs (volatile organic compounds), dust, noise, and compliance with local environmental regula-

tions. Roasting produces pollutants at every stage, yet the cleanest technology has significantly reduced those emissions while using considerably less energy. When evaluating systems, Townley says safety, insurance and

training are expenses that must be considered as part of the cost of doing business.

“Know that some customers will ask pointed questions about where your coffee comes from and about your roasting and its environmental impact. Look at your energy consumption, your footprint and your emissions. If you select an environmentally friendly technology, you are being proactive, and that will position you as a good citizen in the eyes of your customers, your neighbours, and the regulators. The goal is minimal risk for maximum profit.” **yfm**

“Coffee is the great Canadian handshake.”

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On-site roasting...

Differentiates you from your competitors

Shows your customers that freshness is your top priority

Provides a way to manage your freshness

Generates a new revenue stream

Drives sales of brewed product and beans

Establishes you as a coffee leader