

Wine Spectator

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COFFEE

A Coffee Christmas

BY MARK PENDERGRAST

What do you give your favorite coffee lover for Christmas? You could always go for the “Christmas blend” offered by many roasters. Instead, let me suggest three more original options.



THE AEROPRESS: Alan Adler is best known as the inventor of the Aerobie, a Saturn’s-ring-type flying disc that once held the world record (1,333 feet) for the farthest-thrown object without any velocity-aiding feature. But his greatest invention may be the AeroPress, a clever brewer that makes a tasty espressolike beverage. I bought mine from Amazon for about \$30. It looks like a miniature French press but works more like a pressure piston. Put two scoops of finely ground coffee into the cylinder, perched atop your coffee mug. Fill up to the second line with 175° F water. Stir for 10 seconds. Then gently press the piston down. In about 30 seconds, the airtight rubber gasket shoves the water through the grounds and a paper disc filter. Top off the mug with

hot water for regular coffee, or hot milk for a latte.

It makes a fine, clean, aromatic cup of coffee, and you can brew up to four shots at a time and add hot water to fill a standard carafe. For me, the coolest thing about the device is how it cleans up. You just unscrew the filter-holder and shove the piston all the way down over your compost pot. A compressed hockey puck of coffee grounds pops out. Rinse off the bottom of the rubber gasket, and you’re ready to brew again. This would be a perfect gift to try out for Christmas brunch.

MUSIC: I had a brilliant idea: Give a CD anthology of coffee songs. Only I couldn’t find one. So I made my own, and you could too. I went to Amazon and searched MP3 offerings for “coffee.” I listened to samples, then downloaded 30 and chose 20 to burn onto a CD, creating a marvelously eclectic, listenable mix. I started with Peggy Lee’s “Black Coffee,” the quintessential coffee-loves-misery blues. Then “The Coffee Song,” Frank Sinatra’s upbeat ode to the bean: “Way down among Brazilians, coffee beans grow by the billions, so they’ve got to find those extra cups to fill. They’ve got an awful lot of coffee in Brazil.”

There are so many great songs about coffee. “Java Jive,” performed in this case by Manhattan Transfer. “You’re the Cream in My Coffee,” sung silkily by Nat King Cole. “Forty Cups of Coffee,” Bill Haley’s rockabilly lament. “Let’s Have Another Cup of Coffee,” Irving Berlin’s response to the Depression, sung

by Fred Waring’s Pennsylvanians. I threw in an aria from Bach’s “Coffee Cantata” and a frenetic modern song by Jim Infantino called “Stress.” I included a couple of instrumental interludes, “Caffeinated,” by the Treble Makers, and “Sunday Morning Coffee,” by Mannheim Steamroller. One of my favorite songs is Greg Brown’s “Good Morning Coffee,” with its happy, lilting beat, an ode to the classic Maxwell House percolator ads.

My downloads came to \$30 (for my complete playlist contact me at www.markpendergrast.com). An important legal caveat, however: My copyright lawyer advises that it’s OK to burn one CD of music you have purchased for the purpose of a gift, but not to make multiple copies.

BOOKS: There are all kinds of coffee books that would make suitable gifts, such as *The Joy of Coffee*, by Corby Kummer; *The Devil’s Cup*, by Stewart Lee Allen; *God in a Cup*, by Michael Weissman; *Coffee: A Guide to Buying, Brewing and Enjoying*, by Kenneth Davids; or *I Love Coffee!: Over 100 Easy and Delicious Coffee Drinks*, by Susan Zimmer. But here I highlight two books hot off the press.

COFFEE STORY: ETHIOPIA



COFFEE STORY: ETHIOPIA, by Majka Burhardt, photographs by Travis and Helmut Horn (Origin Point Press, 2010, hardcover, \$49.95). This coffee-table book offers an intriguing look at the birthplace of coffee in all its beauty, complexity and mystery. Coffee maven, adventurer, climber and anthropologist Burhardt heard multiple, conflicting myths about coffee’s origins and traveled to the country to sample native coffee concoctions such as *buna kelema*, a porridge of roasted coffee cherries mixed with butter and salt.

UNCOMMON GROUNDS: THE HISTORY OF COFFEE AND HOW IT TRANSFORMED OUR WORLD, by Mark Pendergrast (Basic Books, 2010, revised edition, paperback, \$19.95). Blowing my own horn: Originally published in 1999, *Uncommon Grounds* has become the standard history of the bean. The *Wall Street Journal* wrote: “Pendergrast’s fast-paced narrative reads more like a novel. *Uncommon Grounds* is a focused and juicy history of our last legal and socially acceptable drug.” I have brought the story up to date, including the coffee crisis at the turn of the century, the boom in Fair Trade coffee, and the “third wave” of coffee fanatics. □

