



How about a cup of Joe?

Leader's Guide Written for 2016 program year by Faye Spencer, KAFCE State Vice President

Educational goals: There are health benefits and drawbacks of coffee consumption. Coffee is not just to drink, but can serve as a means to socialize. The benefits of socializing include improved cognitive function.

Community awareness: Start a coffee club and invite others. Encourage nursing homes, senior citizen centers and churches to have a communal area for socializing. Collect coffee grounds and use in community gardens or compost piles.

Public Contacts: Sponsor an informative and/or social public meeting of local officials, candidates, or police officers.

Brief history of Coffee

In a world where people try to stave off sleep for more hours of work, study, or fun, they reach for a cup of coffee. How far back begins the history of coffee? Do coffee's beginnings include a record of industrial espionage that took place long before the industrial revolution? There is a rich history to that cup of black brew. Some called it the devil's drink while others thought it was heaven sent. Banned or blest, it is America's top daily beverage drink, next to water.

An Ethiopian legend, dating about 650 AD, has a herdsman named Kaldi noticing that after his goats had eaten the red berries of a small shrub that they were very frisky. Kaldi sampled the berries and also felt elated. Kaldi took the berries to a local monastery and told the abbot the effects that the berries had. The monk, condemning the berries as Devil's work, threw them into a fire. The aroma of fresh roasted coffee filled the halls. The roasted beans were rescued and cooled in water, thus creating the first barista.

Nearby, an Ethiopian Galla tribe mixed the crushed berries with either animal fat or clarified butter, creating an energy bar of concentrated protein with stimulating caffeine.

The modern commercial coffee plants from around the world can genetically trace their roots to these wild coffee trees found in the Ethiopian highlands. Knowledge of the coffee plants spread with Arab traders to modern-day Yemen. The Arabs cultivated the coffee plants on plantations and started the trade of coffee. By the 1400's, the then very popular beverage was consumed mostly at public coffee houses. The coffee houses became known as the

“School of the Wise” – places for “social interaction, watching performances of music and theater playing chess, local and national news.”¹

The strong controls the Arabs had to monopolize the coffee trade did not surpass the will of those who wanted to spread the coffee production to other parts of the world. The Turks introduced Constantinople to coffee spiced with clove, cardamom, cinnamon, and anise. About the 1600's coffee made its way to Europe. Noticing the popularity of this drink from the Ottoman 'infidels', Pope Clement VII tried the beverage. After tasting it, he had it baptized to prevent the infidels from exclusive use of it, and to fool Satan, making it a Christian beverage.

Like in Yemen, the coffee houses in England were places for social gatherings, which brought many together for discussions of science, economics, and politics. The Royal Society, England's world-renowned scientific think-tank had its beginnings in 1650's at the Oxford coffee house called “The Grand Café.” A London coffee house owner, Edward Lloyd, made a list of his customers' shipping businesses. Then insurance was sold to those merchants. In time, this became the Lloyds of London insurance company. The London Stock Exchange was born at Johnathan's Coffee House in Change Alley. John Castaing issued a price list of stock and commodities. Not only did the patrons get a coffee fix, but they traded and dealt in commodities as well. Also from the English coffee house, comes a custom that is still used today: A box was put out in which coffee house customers would place coins. This box was labeled: “To Insure Prompt Service.” T-I-P-S.

Now for the intriguing stories:

- Before exporting, Arabians would boil the coffee beans making them infertile. But somehow, Baba Budan returned to India with fertile coffee beans seeds tucked into his clothes. One third of the coffee produced in India are descendants from those seeds.
- The Viennese awarded Franz Georg Kolschitzky with 500 bags of green coffee beans and an Austrian nationality for his services that aided in the defeat of the Ottoman Empire army. He opened the first Viennese coffee house, the Blue Bottle. Serving coffee as he learned in Istanbul was not well received. But after adding a spoonful of cream and honey, it became the beverage you can order today as Viennese Coffee.
- Over 19 million Martiniquais and other Caribbean, South and Central American coffee trees came from cuttings of a tree stolen from the Royal Botanical Garden of King Louis XIV of France. French Naval Officer Gabriel Mathieu de Cleu scaled the high walls, obtained cuttings of the royal plant, and set sail back to Martinique. The voyage was not easy. There was mutiny, a pirate attack, and a severe storm that depleted their fresh water supply. The officer used his own water rations to keep the plant alive. Within three years, coffee plantations spread all over Martinique, and other islands of the Caribbean. King Louis forgave Gabriel Mathieu de Cleu and gave him the office of Governor of the Antilles.
- The Brazilian government sent Colonel Francisco de Melo Palheta to settle a border dispute between French Guiana and Dutch Guiana. But the secret mission was to obtain a coffee plant. The dispute was settled and Palheta desired a payback in the form of a coffee plant, but the French Governor refused. Palheta had another plan; wooing the governor's

wife. To repay Palheta for his favors to her, the French Governor's wife gave him a bon voyage bouquet of flowers that were secretly sprinkled with fertile coffee seedlings. The world's largest coffee empire grew from these seedlings.

To Drink or Not to Drink, that is the question

There are many studies and web sites that will give the good and the bad of consuming coffee. Some of the reports seem to counter each other. If suffering from a headache, someone may advise drinking coffee since the caffeine will cause the blood vessels to constrict, relieving some of the pain. Yet, caffeine is addictive, and the side effects to reducing consumption of coffee and/or other caffeinated beverages are fatigue and headaches.

Black coffee does not contain significant amount of nutrients, and coffee is healthier if served black. But when cream and sugar are added, the calories are increased. Significant weight gain could lead to an increased risk of diseases such as Type 2 diabetes. Yet, Harvard Medical School found that regular coffee consumption could help provide protective benefits against Type 2 diabetes, Parkinson's disease, liver cancer, and liver cirrhosis.

Although not a source for nutrients, coffee contains large amounts of caffeine. In an 8-ounce beverage, coffee has the most; a whopping 135 milligrams while energy drinks typically have 75 to 80 milligrams and tea has 25 to 40 milligrams. All this caffeine can interfere with sleep, and cause restlessness. Besides having caffeine, coffee's acidity can aggravate stomach ulcers. For the last bit of bad news, according to Brown University, coffee will increase heart rate, blood pressure, and cholesterol.

What tips the balance between moderation and over-indulgence? Consuming up to six cups a day, with about 200-300 milligrams of caffeine, is safe for most adults. But hold on; not all "cups" are created equal. The right size cup is 8 ounces, making the total for the day 48 ounces.

It is well known that caffeine is a mild diuretic but does it increase dehydration? Michigan State University says it does while Institute for Scientific Information on Coffee, 2015, says no, if consumed in moderation.

Today the phrase "let's have a cup of coffee" is conveying the message "let's have a conversation." As told in the above history of coffee, coffee houses were venues for people to gather and socialize. We still have coffee houses, but coffee is being served at home. Hosting coffee mornings will find friends and family gathering. Especially for the elderly, social isolation has been linked to poorer cognitive function. Having a nursing home communal area will encourage residents to socialize. Even at work, coffee breaks bring colleagues together socially, relieving stress, encouraging creativity and increasing productivity.

Unusual uses for coffee

It seems a waste to throw out used brewed coffee grounds or coffee beans that have gone stale. The following are some tips that are surprising and unusual uses of coffee².

Kill fridge odor: Smelling coffee would be better than foul odors. Leave fresh, unused coffee grounds for a day or two inside the fridge. (This will also work in your car.) The coffee absorbs the odors.

Repel fleas and kills odor: After a bath, the used damp coffee grounds may be rubbed into the dog's coat. This will repel fleas and improves the post-bath wet-dog smell.

Reduce cellulite: Caffeine is the main ingredient in expensive cellulite removal creams. It is reported that caffeine enhances fat metabolism, thus reducing the appearance of cellulite under the skin. DIY: Mix warm coffee grounds with coconut oil. Rub onto skin in circular motion for a few minutes before rinsing.

Exfoliate skin: The skin's dead cells can be buffed away using a ground coffee scrub. DIY: one tablespoon coffee grounds with half tablespoon olive oil and a drop of essential oil (optional).

Make rich compost and Fertilize plants: The coffee grounds will release nitrogen as they degrade but will also amend the soil with phosphorous, potassium, magnesium, and copper. Coffee's acidity level is between 4.9 and 5.2, thus acid loving plants (like azaleas, blueberry, rhododendrons) will flourish with the grounds. You may even dilute your black leftover coffee for houseplants.

Start vermin composting: Red wiggler worms make fast work of your kitchen vegetable waste and coffee grounds. Their by-product makes very rich composting material.

Surface scrub: Mildly abrasive and acidic, coffee grounds can be used alone or with a little dish soap to clean countertops, cooking ranges, and refrigerator surfaces.

Secret recipe ingredient: A bit of coffee added to foods, like chili, ice cream, roast, and chocolate cake, could become the "magic ingredient," providing hint of deep, smoky flavor, or as a tenderizer in a meat marinade.

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References

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