

MONMOUTH

COFFEE COMPANY

OCTOBER 2020

Hi there! Thank you for picking up our October newsletter. We have a number of new coffees coming to the counter this month so keep an eye on the coffee list.

In August we had our Loring roasters serviced to make sure they were ready and raring to go for winter and to keep us caffeinated, or decaffeinated, for whatever the next googly 2020 has in store for us all. Not including sample roasters, we have roasted on four different types of machinery over our 40 something years and eight separate machines.

When we started roasting in 1978 we used a second hand Uno roaster that we bought from Mr & Miss Kennedy who had one of the last French grocery shops in Soho - when the European food stores of Soho were being replaced by the restaurants and bars that we now know. We believe it may have taken as much as 40 pounds of green coffee although Anita can't quite remember. Unos are open flame and also open drum which made for a rather thrilling roasting experience. Chaff from the green coffee would waft around almost alight and as there was no way of accessing the drum during the cycle the degree of roast was determined by the sound of the coffee and volume of smoke filling the basement in our Covent Garden shop. The smoke was dealt with by being ducted to Monmouth Street which was a lot quieter in those days.

We quickly outgrew the Uno and upgraded to a Whitmee, also an English manufacturer of roasting machines. The photo which hangs in our Borough Market shop came with the machine and shows its use during WW2. The Whitmee was marginally less exciting to roast on, its hooded drum meant one could access the coffee to check on its development, with a tea strainer, if you kept out of the flame's way. But we could see the coffee and this was progress. With this development came a proper insulated flue up through the chimney of our 17th century building which was part of the Thomas Neal developments after the Great Fire of 1666.

We outgrew roasting in the basement of the Covent Garden shop and moved to the railway arches in Maltby Street, Bermondsey some fifteen years ago. There we installed Petroncini roasters from Italy. These were different, with a closed drum, indirect flame and more regulated airflow. The roasting smoke was dealt with by afterburners that reduced the visible residue and smells. We had quite a time installing these machines with the first one sent to Monmouth in Monmouthshire before finding its way to us.

When we moved to our current roastery in Spa Terminus we put in two Loring Smart Roasters. These machines are different again. Gone are the cast iron drums that we all had for heat retention and heat consistency and in came shiny stainless steel and roasting by air flow. The burner chamber sits to the back of these machines and the hot air is sent through the drum then back to the burner chamber. The efficiency of the Lorings is excellent and the drum so well sealed we can barely hear the coffee go around. But it does have a good sight glass where we can keep an eye on the roast progress and a good heavy 'trier' to sample as the roast develops.

There are many more different makes and models of roasters in the world but they all essentially do the same thing: get heat into green coffee to develop it into something else entirely. From the first steps in roasting on a pan over fire to the latest software-driven profiling technology, we are all looking for a tasty cup of coffee - that's the thing that doesn't change with method or machinery.

Until next month and with our thanks and best socially distanced wishes,

Monmouth