



COFFEE

By JULIE CATALANO

Here's a fun fact for Texans: After crude oil, coffee is the most traded commodity on the planet. More than 400 billion cups are downed worldwide, with Americans consuming 350 million of those. No stats on Texas, but considering the hundreds of independent coffee shops, bars and roasters around — with more on the way — we are holding our own with the best of them.

From comforting ritual to grab-and-go, coffee fuels millions of Central Texans. Here are just a few people, places and things on your journey to the perfect cup.



HALCYON
AUSTIN, 512.472.9637
SAN ANTONIO, 210.277.7045
HALCYONCOFFEEBAR.COM
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEVIN G. SAUNDERS PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY OF HALCYON

A beverage hotspot in San Antonio’s Southtown, Halcyon is a coffee bar by day and a cocktail bar by night, drawing sippers looking for high-end espressos and specialty cocktails amid the creative ambience of the Blue Star Arts Complex. Open for three years, general manager Seth Williams says business is very good, thanks to a diverse crowd that ranges from teenagers to 50s and beyond who enjoy a friendly, laid-back vibe with occasional live music. Their guest roaster program is a popular draw, with barista manager John Lauber choosing some of the best coffee in the country to showcase for six weeks at a stretch. Chef Alex Dayoc creates sandwiches and salads in an upscale comfort food vein, and also serves up weekend brunch from 10-2 (and you can toast your own s’mores at your table). The original location in Austin will be joined by a new one set to open at the former Miller Airport this year. Halcyon shares the building with Stella Public House, with craft beer and wine and farm-to-table small plates, salads and pizzas. Open daily.



HINEE GOURMET COFFEE, HELOTES
210.695.2000 | HINEEGOURMETCOFFEE.COM
PHOTO COURTESY OF HINEE GOURMET COFFEE

“I like to say we’re Everyman’s coffee shop,” says Jeff Marsh, co-owner with wife Mary. “We’re small, very customer focused and rely totally on customer feedback.” The cozy shop — sandwiched between a donut shop and a hair salon — makes for lively conversation sometimes. “If you don’t know someone when you walk in, you’ll probably know someone when you walk out,” says Marsh, although others choose the shop for alone time or computer time. Some “fairly unique flavored coffees” bring customers back, says Marsh, to see what they come up with next. They still rotate the first two they ever brought in — jalapeno coconut and maple bacon coffee. “Our whole approach is that we’re not brain surgery. People who come in ought to have a positive, fun experience. That’s what we try to do, with an outstanding barista staff that is second to none.” And about that name: “It comes from an old radio series, a vignette that revolved around Hiney Winery. People still talk about it, so we’ve had fun with it. Our motto is ‘Funny name, serious coffee. No ifs, ands, or butts.’” Open daily.

THE WANDER’N CALF ESPRESSO BAR & BAKERY, BOERNE
830.331.9156 | WANDERNCALF.COM

A registered nurse by profession, owner Wendy Rigott started her pop-up coffee shop in 2015 because “I love coffee and I’ve always struggled to find good coffee.” Now she makes great coffee for herself and her newfound fellow coffee lovers in Boerne, next to Ye Kendall Inn and Cibolo Creek. No brewed coffee here, she says. “We do Chemex, pourovers, or French press, and we grind the beans fresh for each cup.” Originally from the Miami area, Rigott’s Cuban coffee — a shot of espresso with abundant white sugar — has been a real hit. Pastries earn a rave, especially decadent scones and their tasty spinoff, the scookie — a thinly sliced scone, great for dipping. Rigott’s special needs daughter also pitches in (“we’d love to eventually reach out to more kids to help train”), and there’s a dog-friendly front porch where pooches hang with

their caffeinated humans. The shop shares space with Sugar Belle’s Cake Shop, known for their luscious cupcakes and more. Closed Sundays.

BLACK IVORY COFFEE, THE ELEPHANT STORY, COMFORT
830.995.3133 | THE-ELEPHANT-STORY.COM
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ELEPHANT STORY

What kind of coffee bean merits a feature on ABC’s *Nightline*? The kind that has been on a wild ride, namely the digestive tract of an elephant, making it one of the most exotic coffees in the world. The only place to find it in North America is at The Elephant Story (TES) in Comfort, Texas. “[Black Ivory Coffee] founder Blake Dinkin agreed to let us



carry it because we are a not-for-profit organization,” says Bobby Dent, co-owner with Ed Story and wife Joey, who founded TES to promote elephant conservation, primarily in Thailand. Up to 26 mostly rescued Asian elephants munch coffee cherries along with their daily diet of fruits, vegetables and plants (“they are not force-fed anything,” assures Dent). About 10 percent of the beans are recovered at the other end, cleaned, roasted and shipped. The result is one smooth brew. “An enzyme in the elephant’s system removes the protein, which is what makes coffee bitter,” explains Dent. For home use, one packet makes one large mug or four demitasse cups, \$40. For the complete in-store experience, up to five people enjoy table service, a short presentation, fresh ground beans prepared in a copper and brass coffeemaker, and one demitasse serving each. Reservations required, \$50. Bottoms up! Closed Tuesday and Wednesday.

GET ROASTED

Not all coffee roasters cater to customers so call ahead before you make the trip. “We are one of the few roasteries open to the public where people can walk in and buy any quantity they desire, from a half-pound and up,” says Tom Novak, general manager of Third Coast Coffee Roasting Company in Austin. Part of the Fair Trade Cooperative called Cooperative Coffees, all of the coffee they source is organic, with one exception — a Columbian that is currently in the process of becoming certified organic. All coffee is \$9/pound, and they’ll grind it at no charge. Closed Saturday and Sunday. 512.444.7820, thirdcoastcoffee.com. Photo courtesy of Third Coast Coffee.

In San Antonio, San Antonio Coffee Roasters has been family owned for nearly three decades. A popular, eco-friendly wholesale roaster of Arabica beans from around the world, their retail storefront called What’s Brewing sells coffees certified by the Rainforest Alliance and the Fair Trade Organization, featuring specialty coffees and blends. Products can also be found at Pearl’s Farmers Market. Closed Sunday. 210.308.0062, sacoffeeroasters.com.



COOL BEANS

This is Texas, and that means a big part of the year is spent fanning ourselves over frosted glasses of cold beverages, not hot cups of steaming coffee. What to do?

With our toasty climate, the state is poised for an all-out iced coffee revolution, says Linda Brewster, founder of the San Antonio Coffee Festival (sacoffeefest.com). Her favorite DIY method starts with a ColdBrew Kit from CoffeeSock™ using organically grown, untreated cotton filters hand-sewn by a family business in Austin (coffeesockco.com). “You put ground coffee in the sock, put the sock in a Mason jar, add filtered water, steep overnight in the fridge, and you have an amazing cup of coffee.” It’s also easier on the tummy, says Brewster. “Iced coffee doesn’t pull out the acids in coffee because the water temperature doesn’t get high enough, so that bitterness and queasy stomach feeling you can get from hot coffee, especially in the morning, is nonexistent with iced.”

Some Vietnamese noodle houses “do the most amazing iced coffee,” says Brewster. Called *ca phe sua da*, it uses sweetened condensed milk and sometimes the addition of chicory, a caffeine-free root especially ideal for decaf drinkers, says Brewster. “If you do a decaf bean with chicory, it is velvety smooth.” Yum. ❖