



LAST STAND COFFEE CO. OWNER
JOSHUA HENRIKSON DECANTS
A BATCH OF FRESHLY ROASTED
BLUE MOUNTAIN BEANS

PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA

THUNDER IN A CUP

Last Stand Coffee Co. brings more beans to the Whit BY RICK LEVIN

In late June of 1876, an armed force concocted of Lakota, Arapaho and Northern Cheyenne warriors waged a bloody battle against the Seventh Regiment of the U.S. Cavalry, which was led by Col. George Armstrong Custer. The ignoble outcome of that campaign struck a ferocious blow to the imperial arrogance of U.S. Indian Policy, and it waxed a gloss of exotic fatalism on the tarnished iconography of the Son of Morning Star (the Indian name for old George). None of Custer's men survived to tell the tale.

Custer's Last Stand was a bitch. And history has seen oodles of infamous last stands. Napoleon. Masada. Charlie Sheen. Rarely do these moments signal anything but botched pride, violent futility and bad karma for the powers that be (we don't call it "Goliath's Last Stand," right?). Every once in a while, though, someone makes a last stand worth celebrating: Peacefully defiant and righteously fed up, such insurgencies aim to build rather than destroy, educate rather than decimate, and they herald a revolution of inclusion, a riot of good vibes.

Coffee, anyone?

Having seen enough of overlong pulls, mealy cream and acid backwash, Eugene java maven Joshua Henrikson put his foot down last year and said: "No more." More precisely, no more burnt coffee beans fobbed off as gourmet. No more stagnant shots. No more McLattes. No more swill and waste.

"I just kind of felt like it was the end of the line for a lot of reasons," says Henrikson as he sits sipping a latte and soaking up sunshine at his new Whiteaker café, The Last Stand Coffee Co. The Colorado native is certainly in his element. Having served in the military and then the service industry, where he's done everything from washing dishes to waiting tables, Henrikson finally decided to make a go of it on his own.

"Society itself is so whacked out in general, and I'd reached the end of myself working for people," says Henrikson, who over the past 8 years has devoted himself

to becoming an expert on all facets of coffee, from crop to cup. Opening July of 2010, at 298 Blair Blvd., just a few blocks down from Tiny Tavern, Last Stand is where Hendrikson has laid his claim to his own private bistro, staking his knowledge and skill on Eugene's willingness to chase down a top-notch buzz.

"It's kind of the last stand for artisan beans," he says, pointing out that Last Stand specializes in single-origin (non-blend) beans from places as far ranging as Ethiopia, Nicaragua and the divine Blue Mountains of Jamaica. "The beans are where it all starts. We kind of feel like artisan coffee is being flushed down. We want to make sure that traditional methods stay."

To this end, Henrikson — at 33, a chronic do-it-yourselfer — drew up designs for a custom roaster heated by propane and driven solely by person power, whether that be pedaling or hand-cranking. The idea was to build a rig for maximum control, even while minimizing its ecological impact. And the contraption is gorgeous, like some copper-plated dream machine from a Terry Gilliam movie, wheels spinning and smoke belching from the steel stack.

Quality inheres in this machine itself. Seated at the controls like a pilot or a seamstress, feet pumping, watching, listening, Henrikson is intimately connected to each 5-pound

batch of hand-selected beans he roasts. Call it the Zen and the art of coffee making. It takes around 45 minutes of relaxed concentration and metonymic motion to roast a single batch. Pedal too fast and the beans cook unevenly; too slow, they burn; stop pedaling altogether and you've got a handful of ash.

Already, in just a year's time, Henrikson has seen his beans hit several local retail shelves, including those at Capella Market, Market of Choice, Sundance Natural Foods and the Kiva. Outlets in Portland and other nearby cities also have shown an interest in carrying Last Stand beans.

To know beans is to love beans. Henrikson admits he actually feels sorry when he sees beans that are poorly roasted, a bit of latter-day animism that recalls the tribal hunter blessing the slain deer before it's butchered. And such DIY technique flies in the face of mechanical methods of mass roasting.

"When you take it from something that's commercially intense and bring it to an art form, and then you incorporate hands-on techniques, you really do become more at one with the bean," he says. "But it's hard to get people to appreciate what goes into the cup."

At Last Stand, *what* goes into the cup dictates *how* it goes into the cup. It's only logical — because, really, why go to all that time and trouble roasting a bean that is, as Henrikson puts it, "somewhere near perfection," if you're only going to wind up sloshing swill into a mug?

With steampunk power driving the production end, Henrikson taps tried-and-true ways when the time arrives to pour a primo jolt of java. Last Stand employs nine different traditional methods to make sure the hand-crafted beans are squeezed just-so into the cup — everything from ristretto espresso shots, French press and cold-water extract to classic Turkish coffee and siphoning, a kind of Rube Goldberg process that works on similar principle as the gravity bong, drawing hot water upward into a chambered shot of pure, smooth goodness.

LAST STAND COFFEE FLIGHT

Learn firsthand about the intricacies of handcrafted beans while sampling from a variety of locally made coffees.

7 pm Saturday, Sept. 10, at The Last Stand Coffee Co., 298 Blair Blvd. For more info, visit [facebook.com/pages/The-Last-Stand-Coffee-Co](https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Last-Stand-Coffee-Co) or call 541-206-5499.