

'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.'

— JOSHUA HENRICKSON

Henrikson has put in countless hours learning about brewing and steaming methods — requiring “a lot of reading, a lot of practice and a lot of just passion,” he says — in order to best bring out the intrinsic qualities of the little green nugget. For instance, he makes sure his ristretto espresso shots are in the Northern Italian mode, so that “you’re just getting the heart ... You’re pulling the intense flavors out of the bean” with little waste and without losing much caffeine.

In addition to coffee, Last Stand offers a selection of specialty drinks that includes London Fog (high-grade Earl Grey tea sweetened with raw honey and cinnamon in steamed milk), the House of Love (made with coconut milk, organic vanilla syrup, lime zest and cardamom) and a House Chai that he believes is the best in town.

On the day we spoke, Henrikson suggested I try a cup of his pride and joy: The Jamaican Blue Mountain, an extremely rare and highly prized coffee bean that he said is predominantly the domain of the rich and famous; landing a batch was a project two years in the making, he says proudly. The beans themselves, which he roasts with surgical precision, retail for more than \$80 a pound. A single cup costs eight bucks.

Listen: It’s worth it. Upon my second sip of Blue Mountain, I noticed that it was not only complexly bodied and utterly devoid of acidity or bitterness, but that its tectonic flavors continued to unravel in my mouth long after the juice was down the gullet. By the third sip, I began questioning the legality of the stuff: My skull felt scrubbed clean by helium, wild with space and clarity, while my body levitated about two inches off the ground without any of the usual jitters and jetlag of over-caffeination. I was gassed to run a marathon and then, like, finish my novel. As in right now.



JOSHUA HENRICKSON
WORKS THE PEDAL-POWERED
COFFEE BEAN ROASTER HE DESIGNED

PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA

Often, such refined and rarefied knowledge such as that Henrikson possesses about coffee can lead to a snifty, shrugging kind of contempt for the uninitiated layman — think of wine snobs, whose blowzy, acidic bullshit about soy sauce and cedarwood seems intended to make you choke on your three-buck Chuck. Last Stand is looking to reverse the sham elitism that can scare off the otherwise curious. This is one of the reasons Henrikson roasts his beans right in the open, in the café’s outdoor-seating area.

“I like the idea of sharing art,” he says, noting that he considers it an honor to be imitated. “It means you’re doing something right,” Henrikson says. “Why hide what we’re doing? We’re proud of it.”

This idea of sharing and community building was one of the principle motives for establishing the Last Stand Coffee Co., he says. The building and back patio have the slow, inviting aura of a Mexican cantina, with trinkets and antiques and musical instruments lying around. There is a turntable and a collection of old vinyl, board games, magazines. The backyard has gardens growing tomatoes, peppers, raspberries. There are poetry readings, open mics and live music nights. On Saturday, Sept. 10, at 7 pm, Henrikson will host an inaugural “coffee flight” for customers who want a first-hand experience of several different bean profiles.

“Something new is going on all the time,” he says. “There are so many artists coming through this place, you can’t keep up with it. Most people come here to talk to each other and set aside their work.”

Some customers have gone so far as to pick up a broom and pitch in when the place is particularly busy. “We have people offering to volunteer all the time,” Henrikson says. “It’s unreal. It’s not something I want to have happen, but it’s really inspiring. That’s what it’s about.” ■

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