



By Dan Bolton

Coffee Museum

New museum celebrates Bedouin coffee culture online and in old town Dubai



DUBAI, UAE – Coffee originated in the Middle East and inspired paintings and tapestries and legends featuring centuries-old brass urns, braziers and artifacts.

Imagine the delight when visiting coffee lovers are invited to hold the original silver and brass urns, utensils, grinders and ornate cups in hand.

Khalid Al Mulla, director of Easternmen & Co., envisioned an innovative, dynamic, interactive setting to share his collection of coffee accessories from every culture and spanning centuries. His dream to create a coffee museum within the narrow streets of the old city in Dubai is realized this month.

Displays are richly authentic with costumed staff to explain the history and various methods of coffee making from the earliest Ibrik to the modern Japanese Syphon.

A centerpiece is a magnificent silver Egyptian charcoal fired burner that greets visitors entering the main floor.

“By the late 15th century and early 16th century, coffee had spread to Cairo. There charcoal headed a bed of sand.

The Ibrik was placed in the hot sand resulting in a perfect brew due to equal distribution of the heat that surround the Ibrik from side and bottom,” Al Mulla explained.

The process remains much the same today with finely ground coffee beans boiled in the Ibrik, usually with sugar, and served in a small brass cup where the grounds are allowed to settle before serving.

To the left of the grand foyer is a pillow lined chamber with a brazier at which Bedouin greeted guests outside their tents.

Coffee has long been an important part of the Arabian culture. A mid-15th century host served the coffee with dates or candied fruit on pillows spread on a carpet with the coffee utensils displayed on a low round table of carved wood.

The process begins by lightly roasting the Arabic Coffee “Qahwa” in a round pan at 329 to 410 degrees Fahrenheit (165-210 C) often with cardamom. Using the metal “Mehmass” to stir the coffee it is then ground in a “Menhaz” and brewed in a Arabic pot known as a “Dallah.” The coffee is transferred to a smaller pot for serving. Coffee is poured into the “Finjan” in small amounts. It is boiling hot, so larger amounts would take too long to cool. Once you are done shaking the cup left and right, the cup is rinsed in a water bowl “Ghusool,” said Al Mulla.

“For many centuries, Arabic coffee has been much more than a hot tonic, it is an art, a lifestyle and a tradition that goes back to ancient times,” said Ibrahim bin Karam, the chief commercial officer, Emirates Post Group which celebrated the importance of these ancient tools in a series of commemorative stamps issued in January.

The most common practice is to drink only one cup, since serving coffee serves as a ceremonial act of kindness and hospitality. Sometimes people also drink larger volumes during conversations.

The museum also includes artifacts from the 1683 Battle of Vienna made famous as the defeat of the Ottoman Empire’s armies revealed many sacks of green coffee later used by Franciszek Jerzy Kulczycki to open the first of Vienna’s celebrated coffee houses.

Coffeemuseum.ae is the first interactive worldwide museum of coffee, complimented by a two-story museum that



Khalid Al Mulla with Ottoman Turkish antique folding handle coffee bean roaster



Pouring coffee from a “Dallah”



Hand-turned brass coffee grinder





Abdulhamid Awad with the silver Egyptian sand bed coffee heater.



unlocks the “secrets” of trading, traditions, emotions and stories, he explains during a pre-opening tour.

“Like a physical museum we’ll have permanent and temporary exhibitions, an academy and a library with a roadmap of scientific publications and events,” said Al Mulla one of the founders of Easternmen & Co. in 1994 to import and distribute traditional, organic and Fairtrade certified green coffee along with coffee making machines and accessories. The firm represents boutique roasters including Mocambo in Germany and operates Café Retro, a restaurant and training academy for local baristas.

“We want to create a huge network of stakeholders including growers, brands, coffeehouses and suppliers. Also, we will present tourist adventure trips that link the virtual to the real world,” he said.

“To bring the museum to life we designed a building inspired in the old coffee fields of São Tomé and Príncipe that provides an unprecedented link between past and present, shadow and light, art and nature, while engaging you in an immersive web experience,” he explains.

“We are developing something new, and creating an extra layer of value across all coffee stakeholders while competing with none,” he said. Al Mulla seeks to elevate the art of coffee to a school like cubism or surrealism, “most of all we want to create “coffeeism” a concept that taps the “power of the consumer.

Coffeemuseum.ae encourages coffee lovers to share opinions, tastes, experiences, emotions and moments with coffee through videos, images, articles, artwork, sketches and more.

The goal is to encourage innovation and reveal trends for coffee stakeholders that will result in new business models, concepts, products, coffee machines and services. ☕

Learn more at: www.coffeemuseum.ae

