

The Green Grind



The Abbott



T.A.N



Travelling the streets of Toronto in search of great coffee is not hard to find when you have the Indie Coffee Passport.

Connect with coffee

An intoxicating aroma had been following me over the course of four days in late November. I couldn't figure out where the bold fragrance of refreshing fruit-like and flowery tones was coming from, but I knew my sense of smell enjoyed it.

Buried deep in the bottom of my oversized school bag, I had found the culprit of the enchanting aroma. I reached in and pulled out a small paper brown bag, across the front of the bag, printed in red bold font, was the word, "Ethiopian."

It was coffee beans, Ethiopian beans to be exact.

I had forgot Chunhui Zhang, an employee at The Alternative Network (T.A.N.) Coffee cafe, had given me a bag from T.A.N. when I had interviewed him.

Zhang, 27, has been working at T.A.N. for over five months, at their location on Queen Street West, which opened in 2008.

Between sips of the delicious Ethiopian roast, Zhang confirmed in our interview that this roast was the most popular at the independent café.

The reason my school bag smelled better than the reactions of people in Folders coffee commercials, was because T.A.N. roasts their coffee every week.

"It's to ensure freshness and quality coffee to our customers," Zhang said.

T.A.N. posts the date of when their coffee was roasted, which grocery stores don't.

"You could be drinking coffee that was roasted two years ago, but you would never know," he said.

Besides roasting in-house every week, T.A.N. serves some of the world's best coffee, which is one of the reasons why T.A.N. is featured in the Toronto Indie Coffee Passport (ICP).

The Toronto Indie Coffee Passport is a tiny green passport, expanding to the lengths of four business cards that feature 30 coffee shops throughout the downtown core of Toronto. The passport is \$25 and can be purchased online at torontoindiecoffeepassport.com, or at participating cafés. It is good from Sept. 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012.

Adrienne and Richard are the brains behind the ICP and this will be their second year running it. Besides running the ICP, they don't own a coffee shop and are not associated with the coffee or food industry in any way.

There are a few reasons why Adrienne and Richard wanted to start the ICP.

"First and foremost, we wanted to showcase the amazing independent coffee shops throughout Toronto," Adrienne said.

"We simply love good coffee and wanted to see what we could do to promote independent coffee culture in general."

T.A.N.'s coffee shop pairs perfectly with one of the reasons why Adrienne and Richard started ICP.

"Right now we are selling coffee from Nicaragua, it was ranked number eleven in the 2011 international Cup of Excellence competition," Zhang said.

The Cup of Excellence is a nonprofit organization that supports organic fair trade coffee from eight countries around the world.

Each of these countries holds a Cup of Excellence competition each year within their own country.

Anywhere from 200 to 600 farmers come out and have their brew judged by a select group of coffee experts from around the world. Coffees that score over 80 are asked to move forward to the international section of the competition.

The final winners of this section are then awarded the prestigious Cup of Excellence and sold to the highest bidder during an Internet auction.

Lay Yong, founder of T.A.N., explained only members of the Cup of Excellence can bid for these coffees because they are rare and fetch very high prices.

"We are the only café in the world that sells the number eleven Nicaragua coffee," Zhang said, smiling proudly.

Kayla Kreutzberg's first pet was a turtle named Franklin. She also loves moose track ice cream. Read more about the Indie Coffee Passport at ejectmagazine.com