

Home of Espresso, the World-Changing Coffee

1906, Milan: the world was introduced to the first *caffè espresso* when business partners Pavoni and Bezzera presented their pressure-brewing machines at a convention. These were the forerunners of all modern espresso machines.

Italy is the home of the espresso—a small coffee drink that has had a huge worldwide influence. *Un caffè* (espresso), is the concentrated extraction of coffee produced by the espresso machine and is the base of hundreds of coffee-based beverages. Italy's centuries-long national romance with coffee has not abated: today, around 150,000 coffee bars make espresso across the country, and surveys suggest that 90 percent of Italian adults have drunk coffee in the last 24 hours.

By the late sixteenth century, news of coffee had begun to spread beyond the Ottoman Empire, as several physicians, botanists, and travelers wrote of a drink they had encountered in Turkey and Egypt. Although the date of coffee's arrival in Europe is not entirely clear, it is generally assumed the Venetians were the first to encounter it, given their trading connections with, and proximity to Turkey (Greece

and some other contemporary European states were part of the Ottoman Empire at the time). A botanical description was published in Italy in 1592, and popular legend (albeit apocryphal) has it that Pope Clement VIII (1536–1605) blessed the Islamic brew, permitting its use by Christians, thus enabling its spread through Italy.

Regardless of the authenticity of this story, coffee did catch on in Italy fairly quickly, with the first *caffetteria* (coffeehouse) opening in Venice in the mid-1600s. The coffeehouses of Turkey and the Arabian Peninsula were thus adopted and adapted into the West. These hubs of socialization, merriment, and liberalization spread across other European countries in quick succession. In Italy today, espressos are regularly drunk *al banco* (at the counter), sometimes with a sweet pastry, in a ritual that may be repeated several times a day.

In 1819, *la cuccuma*, a reversible drip filter coffee pot, was invented by a French tinsmith. This invention enabled even the less affluent, who could not afford to frequent cafés, to prepare and drink good coffee at home. While it is called *la cuccuma* in Naples, this style of coffee maker earned the name *la caffettiera napoletana* (Neapolitan coffee maker) outside of the city. It remained popular across Italy until the invention of the *moka* coffee maker in 1933.

The *moka* ended up being a quicker and easier stovetop coffee maker, using pressure to force hot water through the coffee. It wasn't long before it became the most-popular at-home method in Italy. It can now be found from the Dominican Republic to Australia, and goes by many names: *caffettiera*, *greca*, *cafetera*, *macchinetta*, or *la cafetera italiana*. The *moka* uses pressure to brew, so it is often called a stovetop espresso maker—but because the pressure is lower than that of an espresso machine, the *caffè della moka* (*moka* coffee) is not considered true espresso.

