

Momentum

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While London ranks fourth on the global list of cities with the most Starbucks cafes, the third-wave coffee scene has reached its own heights in London. And, if you ask around London to understand where the city's craft coffee scene began, it seems like all roads lead back to one place: Square Mile Coffee Roasters out of East London.

It doesn't have a physical storefront or cafe, but it's likely that anyone who has grabbed a cup of joe in the British capital has already tasted Square Mile's coffee. The roaster wholesales its coffee to some 150 cafes, restaurants, hotels, and shops around the world. While its footprint is primarily centered within the U.K., you'll also find its beans pop up across the globe, in places like Boutique Coffee in San Mateo, California; Menta Specialty Coffee Shop in Lefkosa, Cyprus; and Sage & Sirloin in Hamala, Bahrain.

The roastery was founded by James Hoffmann (2007 World Barista Champion) and Anette Moldvaer (a World Cup Tasting Champion) in 2008. Hoffmann's introduction to coffee was through a job demonstrating domestic espresso machines in a department store in Victoria, London; later, he started his own gig as a coffee product and business development consultant. Moldvaer started as a barista at Dromedar in Trondheim, Norway before working at the London-based Supplier Mercanta and The London School of Coffee.

"Before Square Mile, both myself and my business partner had been working in coffee education," said Hoffmann. "I think there comes a point where you feel like you should stop telling people how to do it, and go out and do it yourself. It was a business that was started from a place of passion but not a great deal of business knowledge—which we've worked hard to rectify since."

And while people attribute the start of the London craft coffee scene to Square Mile, Hoffmann says it was due more to the communal nature of the city's nascent industry in the mid-2000s. "The early years were exciting, manic, and frantic but full of energy and momentum. I think London's scene boomed so well because London had built a really cohesive [coffee] community all working towards the same thing."

One example he mentioned was World Barista Champion Gwilym Davies's Disloyalty Card, a free coffee passport of sorts. Patrons who

visited all eight of the East London coffee shops on the card received a free coffee at Davies's coffee shop, Prufrock.

Moldvaer and Hoffmann's legacy since then has reached beyond cafes and roasteries. Each has also each published coffee guidebooks, combining their experiences in the coffee industry as baristas and educators. Moldvaer's *Coffee Obsession*, breaks down more than 100 coffee recipes from around the globe—it's like a training handbook for non-baristas. The book dives into everything from growing and harvesting to roasting and brewing.

And you'll find Hoffmann's books in cafes across the world, from Lisbon to Bali. *The Atlas of Coffee* (its second edition was released in late 2018) dives deep into the coffee process from bean to brew. But what's most interesting is the country-by-country overview of the coffee production in more than 35 countries, detailing historical background, growing regions, coffee varieties, and more. To date, it has sold more than 200,000 copies, with an audience that encompasses both coffee newbies and experts alike.

"It was a much bigger and more difficult project than I initially imagined," said Hoffmann. "In the course of writing the book, it became clearer to me that I wanted this book to be a kind of guidebook to this new world of coffee that had seemingly come out of nowhere, and yet seemed so fully formed. I was frustrated by our reputation as an industry of being pretentious, exclusive, and snobby. I tried to write a book that made coffee more accessible and inclusive."

Out of everything he learned, he said that what surprised him the most was how brutal and, frankly, unpleasant the history of coffee production was. "I think I'd come into coffee at a time when all the messaging around sourcing had been so positive, so focused on rewarding quality, that I hadn't understood the endemic unfairness that the industry is built upon."

And it is those values of sustainable sourcing, a focus on quality and ethical business practices, with which Square Mile Coffee Roasters now not only operates but also leads the British coffee industry—and the third-wave coffee culture—by example.

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