

It's time you knew beans about coffee

by Arinn Dixon

On the left side of the serving counter in Caribou Coffee is a large science fair-type backdrop that screams, "It's time you knew beans about coffee!" Underneath is a map of different coffee-producing countries with a bit of info about each. To the left of the map is a chart labeled "Caribou's Whole Bean Color Coding System," which measures both the acidity (that is, the crispness and clarity associated with the most interesting coffees) and the body (a measure of how heavy a coffee feels in your mouth). The menu boasts such things as Tiramisu and Sumatra Mandheling. Obviously, the folks at Caribou take their coffee pretty darn seriously.

The serious mood of Caribou stops at the coffee, however. It's not the kind of place where people with poetic minds go to brood, like other coffee places in Raleigh. The music, rather than having that low, mellow sound associated with most coffee houses, is instead an eclectic mix of 1920's big band music and old Tears for Fears, with a little bit of Cindi Lauper thrown in. It's played loud enough to be heard, but not loud enough to dominate every conversation.

The shelves on the back wall hold a selection of board games waiting to

be played and old books waiting to be read. People don't huddle exclusively around their tables talking only to one another; instead everyone smiles and chats with each other and a constant, but comfortable, hum permeates the room.

The originators of Caribou have created a fun atmosphere for the average Joe who knows nothing about coffee, and who probably has no desire to become a coffee connoisseur. I went in there with a friend one Friday night at about 8:30, and I didn't even think about leaving until the place closed at midnight. We brought back childhood memories with a vicious card game of War, played Scrabble until they kicked us out, and tried four different kinds of coffee in between.

The guys at the table next to us grabbed the Jenga set and scared the mess out of everyone in the place every time someone put just one too many block on top and the whole thing scattered across the floor. There were people hustling and bustling all around and lots of conversations going on at once, but it wasn't crowded - it was homey.

Just like the atmosphere, the menu

does not assume that everyone knows all about coffee. Each drink on the menu board has an explanation right below it, so if you didn't know that cafe mocha is chocolate coffee with a dollop of real cream on top, that's no problem. That cafe mocha is only \$2.45 for a tall cup, which is a good deal. Cafe latte is only \$1.80 for a small and \$2.00 for a tall, and a medium cappuccino is \$2.35.

For those who didn't like the taste of coffee Caribou has Mexican hot chocolate, hot tea, Snapple, bottled water and juice. They also have scrumptious desserts like German chocolate cake and raspberry torte.

On the side wall, they have items for sale such as t-shirts, mugs, tea and coffee canisters, coffee blends and grape and cinnamon syrups.

Caribou Coffee is located on Hillsborough St. beside McDonald's across from NCSU. It is open Monday-Friday from 6:30am to 12:00am, Saturday from 8:00am to 12:00am, and Sunday from 8:00am from 11:00pm. Just remember if you decide to go, and I hope you do, that it is not your run of the mill coffee house - it's much more fun. Caribou is a place where people can meet friends, have a cup of coffee, and just enjoy themselves.

Restaurant Review

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SGA Corner

• During Cornhuskin', SGA and the Service Council are sponsoring a canned food drive. You are encouraged to help promote campus unity by giving to those who are less fortunate than you. Look for barrels around campus during the week.

• Suggestion boxes have been placed around campus by the Student Life Committee. If you have any concerns or suggestions, please take the time to fill out your card and place it in the box.

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