

# Drip, Drip, Drip

Your Cold Coffee Will Be Ready in 12 Hours

By Rick Hodges

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Ever since an Ethiopian peasant observed the excited and alert state of his goats after they ate from a certain small tree found high in the hills, as the story of coffee's origin goes, people have tried new ways to enjoy the fruits of the plant. In his book "The Devil's Cup," Stewart Lee Allen travels the historical path of coffee's journey from its origin in Ethiopia to mugs worldwide, encountering many creative ways of extracting its essence along the way. Boiling the leaves, eating balls made of whole beans, even collecting beans eaten and expelled by the civet cat—people will try anything to enjoy a good jolt of joe.

I have had my own journey on the road to java nirvana. But now, at two or three cups a day, my search for the perfect cup of coffee has ended: I have found cold-process coffee.

Not long ago a strange package arrived from my sister-in-law Becky. Her birthday gift was a device manufactured by Toddy Products of Houston—little more than a bucket with a hole in the bottom blocked by a filter and a cork. Inside, ground coffee soaks overnight in cold water. When you remove the cork, a thick coffee syrup drains from the bucket into a carafe. You store the concentrated coffee in the refrigerator. When you want a cup, you pour a little into your mug and add boiling water or hot milk. It's incredibly smooth and mellow.

Cold processing takes 8 to 12 hours to make the syrup, but it's worth the wait. In that time, you get about 36 cups of delicious "instant" coffee that also works wonderfully for cold coffee drinks or baking.

The inspiration for the Toddy maker came to Houston from Guatemala, where Todd Simpson, a garden nursery owner on a plant-gathering trip in the early 1960s, ordered coffee in a small cafe. "They sat in front of him a little urn of coffee concentrate and boiling water," said his son, Strother Simpson. "He tasted it, and he thought it was the best cup of coffee he ever had."

Todd Simpson brought the idea home to his wife. "He sort of made a contraption to make this coffee," said his son, in a Texas accent as thick as coffee syrup. His mother had a delicate stomach and couldn't tolerate coffee, but her system handled the cold-brewed coffee just fine. That was enough for Todd, who invented a simple concentrate maker—soon dubbed "Toddy" after its inventor—and started a business in his garage. Forty years and thousands of Toddy makers later, Strother runs the business.

Todd Simpson had a degree in chemical engineering from Cornell, so of course he tested his coffee to learn why it was so tasty and gentle on the stomach. Simpson claimed that brewing coffee in hot water leaches out acids, fatty acids and other unpleasant substances, all of which end up in your cup. A cold-process coffeemaker leaves that nasty stuff behind. According to the Toddy company, lab tests have found 3 to 4 times more acid in hot-brewed coffee (a pH of 5.48, versus 6.31 for cold-process coffee, for those of you who still remember your high school chemistry).

The cold-process coffeemaker proves the secret that high-priced gourmet bean sellers don't want you to know—good coffee is mostly in the preparation. Overheat your coffee, let the beans go stale, add too much or too little of the grinds or let it sit on a warmer all day, and even the most expensive beans grown inside the cone of a volcano and hand-picked by virgins will taste like pond water. On the other hand, my Toddy maker produces good coffee even from run-of-the-mill, pre-ground beans from a can. Sure, cold processing takes a little foresight, but the results are worth it.

Nobody knows for sure where and when the cold-process method came about—Strother Simpson thinks it started in Peru—but we know that Todd Simpson was not the first to bring it to America. The editors of Scientific American reported a breakthrough in coffee technology back

in 1847. "Among all the new inventions and discoveries that are astonishing the world," they wrote, "we have heard of none which promises to be more useful and acceptable, at least to ladies, than 'The Essence of Coffee,' which is now offered to the lovers of that beverage. It is the genuine stuff, put up in bottles, at a low price. You have only to put a teaspoon full into a cup of water containing the usual complement of sugar and milk, and you have a cup of superior coffee without further trouble."

What happened to that first venture in coffee concentrate is lost to history. But today we can also buy coffee concentrate instead of making our own. Toddy Products sells coffee and tea syrup ready to use, as do several other companies. In fact, since Strother Simpson began selling the syrup in 1990, most of his business has come from sales of concentrate to commercial manufacturers of beverages and food containing coffee or tea.

Even if your taste buds can't distinguish between a fine cup of gourmet kava and a plastic foam mug of overheated slag from a convenience store, the convenience of cold-processed coffee is easy to like. It is just as quick to make in the morning as freeze-dried instant coffee, and you can control the strength of each cup by using more or less concentrate. Heating the concentrate itself without adding hot water gives you a drink that resembles espresso. Making cold coffee drinks is a snap, and it even works well for baking recipes that call for coffee.

The Toddy maker is a simple contraption, and its design has changed very little in 40 years. Strother Simpson took over the business in 1986 and made few alterations to the product. "I changed the package and tried to give it a face-lift." Coffee aficionados have bought about 20,000 makers a year since the company began, says Strother, but sales of the maker or the pre-made concentrate never took off in either retail stores or cafes, not even when Starbucks carried the device in its early years.

Americans are still experimenting today with espresso makers and French presses. But for people who have discovered Todd Simpson's little machine, it is the ultimate coffeemaker.

## RECIPES

*Cold-Process Coffee:* Instructions may vary, depending on your brand of cold-process coffeemaker. But in general, add ground coffee to

the container and fill with cold water, as directed. Let the mixture "cold brew" undisturbed for 12 hours. Remove the stopper and let concentrate flow into the decanter. Refrigerate. To serve, add one part concentrate to three parts boiling water (or add cold water and microwave). For iced coffee, serve over ice.

You can also substitute it in any recipe that calls for coffee, including baked goods, diluting it to normal coffee strength if necessary.

Or use the concentrate in the following recipes. A stove or microwave will work if you don't have a steamer.

*Cappuccino:* Steam 3 ounces of coffee concentrate in a stainless pitcher to 185 degrees. Pour the steamed concentrate into a cappuccino cup. Froth 6 ounces of 2 percent milk and quickly add to the cup. Sprinkle with cinnamon.

*Mocha:* Follow the recipe for Cappuccino, adding one ounce of sweetened chocolate candy or baker's chocolate to the concentrate before heating it.

*Latte:* Steam 8 ounces of 2 percent milk to 185 degrees in a stainless pitcher. Pour steamed milk into your cappuccino cup. Steam 3 ounces of coffee concentrate, then pour the steamed concentrate into the middle of the steamed milk. Pour so that there is a little dot of coffee left in the middle. Sprinkle with cinnamon.

*Iced Cappuccino:* Mix 2 ounces of coffee concentrate with 6 ounces of 2 percent milk and 1/8 teaspoon of vanilla. Pour the mixture over ice and add sweetener to your liking.

*Toddy Frappe:* In a blender, mix 1/2 cup coffee concentrate and 1/2 cup 2 percent milk. Add 1/2 cup of ice and 3 large scoops of vanilla ice cream. Blend until smooth and pour into a glass. Top with whipped cream and chocolate shavings.

*Rick Hodges is freelance writer who lives in Arlington.*