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Coffee and the magic of India

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The history of Indian coffee dates back to the 17th century, when, as is rumored, the Sufi saint Baba Budan, returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca, smuggled seven coffee beans, hiding them

in his beard, clothes or walking stick, from Yemen to Mysore (southern India), where he planted them in hills with an altitude of almost 2000 meters. Gradually, the plantations began to spread and expand. Coffee was one of the drinks served at the imperial court of the Mughals, the Muslim dynasty of Turko-Mongol origin that ruled most of northern India from the early 16th to the mid-18th centuries. As in the case of Constantinople, vivid testimonies and narratives survive about the smoky coffeehouses of Old Delhi, where coffee served as a trigger for new forms of social interaction and entertainment, lively discussions, the exchange of ideas and the recitation of poetry.




India’s contribution to the global history of coffee does not stop there: coffee from the Portuguese colony of Goa was sent to Brazil to strengthen its cultivation. The British colonial period gave a decisive impetus to the spread of coffee in South Asia. Today, more than half of the coffee production in India comes from Karnataka. Kerala and Tamil Nadu claim a significant share, and partly the northeastern states. India is now among the 10 largest producers and exporters of coffee in the world. Domestic production is dominated by three varieties: Arabica, Robusta, and another based on a blend of Liberica and Arabica. Quality coffee is grown under the shade of trees and with limited exposure to the sun.





Coffee has established itself in almost the entire Indian subcontinent as a symbol of relaxation and business meetings. Large foreign companies have entered the Indian market. Filter Coffee (Filter Kaapi) remains the most iconic type of coffee, especially in the southern states. The Indian public has begun to become familiar with Western types of coffee, such as Americano and Cappuccino, which due to the addition of milk are becoming increasingly popular. Instant

coffee is also popular. Cold Coffee is also one of the most beloved drinks: its frothy texture and the combination of iced milk, sugar and sometimes vanilla ice cream make it particularly refreshing, especially in the summer months.

As mentioned above, Filter Coffee represents the most authentic and “exotic” version of Indian coffee. Two cylindrical metal containers, a pressure plate and a lid are used for its preparation. The upper container has tiny holes in its base, which allow the extracted coffee to drip slowly downwards. Generally, a blend of coffee with dark roasted beans and chicory is used, which gives a subtle nutty flavor. In addition, whole milk is required, which is indicated for a creamy and velvety texture. The key to the perfect texture is the careful “beating”, the frothing which, as with the cream of Greek coffee, has an almost ritualistic character: the coffee and milk mixture is artfully poured from different heights between the two metal cups, so that the coffee is aerated and acquires a rich frothy surface, which is essential for preserving the aromas and taste. It is noteworthy that Ayuverda favors herbal infusions over coffee, because it is considered that it can cause overheating of the human body and overstimulation of the nervous system. These side effects of coffee are balanced by the use of milk, cardamom, nutmeg, cinnamon, coconut oil or ghee, i.e. clarified butter, which is made from cow, buffalo or mixed milk.





Indian coffee captures the inexhaustible potential of an ancient civilization to evolve and assimilate modern trends. A feast of colors and aromas, a taste of eternity, filtered through a steaming cup of coffee, when one wants to enjoy the morning freshness, complete a delicious meal or close one’s day and carefreely abandon oneself to the allure of the unique Indian evenings.

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