



Scottie Callaghan is Belaroma Head Trainer and two-time Australian Barista Champion 2007 and 2010

## The rise and rise of the barista

As one of the world's most recognised competition Baristas, Scottie Callaghan is perfectly positioned to let us into the mindset that makes this one of his life's priorities. I was intrigued, so I asked him to give us a glimpse at what goes on behind the scenes and in the minds of the competition barista, and whether a connection exists between the competition barista and the thousands of hard working baristas in cafes all over Australia? Steve Agi - Editor.

I have been very fortunate over the last six years in barista competitions, not only to have won but to have been given the opportunities that I have been able to take advantage of which would not have presented themselves should I not be at the top of my game in the industry.

In 2002 I decided that I wanted to build a career as a barista and to compete professionally. It was a life changing moment and a decision that would impact on the rest of my life in a big way. In 2006 I won the World Latte Art Championship, and the following year I won the Australian Barista Championship and went on to represent Australia in the World Barista championship in Tokyo.

After this, I hung up my barista competition hat for a few years, content to serve the humble bean as a regular barista. However once bitten by the bug there is no escape, it was in my blood, I was itching to get back!

In November 2009 I decided to compete again and through the support of Belaroma Roasting Company who not only sponsored me but also allowed me to dedicate the time and energy to training, I was fortunate enough



to win the 2010 Australian Barista Championship. Once again this will allow me to represent Australia in the World Barista Championship which will take place in London in June.

The rise of the barista can be attributed to barista competitions, as I believe the competitions have played

a major role in the growth of the art including the understanding and acceptance of what a barista is and does. The two most coveted prizes of all barista competitions is the Specialty Coffee Association of Europe and the Specialty Coffee Association of America's 'World Barista Champion' title.



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This title has been won once by an Australian, Paul Bassett in 2003 and David Makin came impressively close in 2008 with 2nd place.

Over the 10 years that the World Barista Championship has been running, Australia has competed every year, and in seven out of ten years we have placed in the top 10 throwing Australia onto the world stage and giving us a large amount of respect in the world of specialty coffee.

When you add these three world champion titles in the growing Specialty Coffee Association of Europe's World Latte Art Championship – Scottie Callaghan in 2006, Jack Hanna in 2007 and Con Haralambopoulos in 2008, Australia has an impressive lineup of highly successful baristas in the world of specialty coffee.

If you Google any of these names, you will find numerous websites, newspaper articles and blogs talking about their success. The exposure of these baristas with the help of the media has achieved a tremendous amount of respect and recognition for the barista craft all over Australia.

The exposure of our award winning baristas has definitely helped raise the profile of the specialty coffee industry and achieve great success in educating consumers about what good coffee is. A great example of this is Paul Bassett's 'Living Coffee' TV series which has screened a few times on various channels and is available on DVD,

The industry is growing significantly and there is a group of like minded people who are totally committed to further developing, raising awareness and educating the barista skills which is done through an association called AASCA (the Australasian Specialty Coffee Association).

The passion this group of individuals has stems from an experience they have all had. It's hard to explain, maybe it would be best to describe it as a coffee epiphany. That one life changing and defining moment that can only be experienced from a true specialty coffee.

A truly good barista works hard for perfection behind an espresso machine because he/she is passionate about their customers having the opportunity to taste true specialty coffee. They are not a perfectionist for the sake of perfection but for the sake of the customers. And here lies the connection between the true barista or what some have called the third wave barista and the competition barista, both have a passion for true specialty coffee. Not to mention that many of the rules and regulations of the WBC format are directly related to what a barista should be doing every day behind their bar.

In the recent Australian Barista Championship, I used an organic coffee called Costa Rica Fazenda Las Lajas, an SHB grade pulped natural. The aroma and taste of this coffee when fresh from crop, roasted well, brewed close to the

roasted on date and brewed with the right skill will change anyone's understanding and opinion of coffee. The majority of unroasted green coffees bought and sold around the world do not provide the consumer with enough background information on where it was grown or how it was roasted, so there is no traceability.

Another coffee I used is a semi washed coffee from CV Yudi Putra, from a mill run by a man called Dodi who I had a coffee with recently at the Belaroma Coffee Centre. Dodi has shares in a mill with his Uncle and Father situated in Sidikalang in northern Sumatra west of Lake Toba. Dodi, his uncle and father have a relationship with 350 farmers who they buy ripe red coffee cherries from. In April I will be visiting Dodi and his farmers and cupping coffee with them, if I was not a barista competing professionally I would never get opportunities such as these.

It is for this reason I compete, and without a doubt why my colleagues also compete – because they have either had these opportunities or they want to prove their value so that they can experience them.

And this too is the role of the barista, to understand the value of these things, to have the knowledge and insight about them and to use that understanding and knowledge to deliver what the customer deserves – respect through a great cup of "true specialty coffee".