

THE COFFEE ENTERTAINER

Coffee talk with La Colombe CEO and cofounder Todd Carmichael

Jan Tegner
30 April 2014



As the outspoken frontman for Philadelphia-based La Colombe Coffee Roasters, Todd Carmichael generates a good deal of discussion among coffee geeks.

Master roaster, adventurer (Carmichael holds the speed record for a solo, unsupported trek on foot across Antarctica) and star of the Travel Channel reality TV show *Dangerous Grounds*, Carmichael launched La Colombe in 1994 with partner JP Iberti to blend the tradition of European coffee roasting with America's ever-evolving fine cuisine.

Their "culinary coffee" - created with kitchen and palate in mind - resonated with chefs, culminating in collaborations with famed restaurateurs Mario Batali, Gordon Ramsay, Jean-Georges Vongerichten and Grant Achatz, among others.

The public gradually caught on as well, and today La Colombe roasts its renowned single-origin and classic coffees for independent cafés, organic markets and more than 5,000 chefs, in addition to its own cafés in New York, Washington D.C., Chicago and Seoul.

We met Carmichael in Philadelphia for coffee talk about his entertaining philosophy.



CENTURION: What's your biggest pet peeve about the expanding world of fine coffee?

Todd Carmichael: I'm an entertainer with coffee. I entertain primarily through the mouth. I have to get to your brain through your mouth with my coffee, but I want to treat you like the precious person you are as a member of this audience. In the coffee industry, people forget this. They take 35 minutes to make your drink. They talk down to you, they lecture you, they mentor you. My feeling is that, at a café, you shouldn't wait more than five minutes in any line, I can't handle it. That diminishes the degree of entertainment.

Which country's coffee tradition do you like best?

I have a wandering eye when it comes to coffee. Right now I'm drinking a Yirgacheffe, an Ethiopian coffee. No coffee in the world is as good to me as this coffee currently.

If I was stranded on a desert island and could only choose coffee from one country - it's Ethiopia, man, hands down. It's the best coffee-growing country on the planet. It's where coffee started, and the coffee community is so deep. If you get a grade-one Ethiopian coffee it will blow your mind.

How would you describe the ideal café?

The perfect café has coffee that represents the three cleaves of flavour within coffee. One is chocolatey, one is nutty-sweet, and one is fruit. That's generally where people fall. The biggest group fit into that chocolate-y area with coffee that's slightly darker and tends to work well - like chocolate does - with milk.

THE OCEAN SUITES™
AT THE SETAI, MIAMI BEACH

CONSPICUOUSLY PRIVATE
For those who know

The new Ocean Suites experience includes:
Round-trip private airport transfers,
flexible arrival and departure times,
daily breakfast, a spa treatment
and more.

A special introductory offer awaits.

[LEARN MORE >](#)

INSIDER KNOWLEDGE



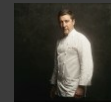
Not taking risks is the biggest risk one can take when creating future experiences.

Yves Behar - renowned industrial designer

11 AUGUST 2011

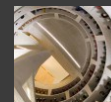


EDITOR'S CHOICE



Joan Roca on the celebrated El Celler de can Roca

28 SEPTEMBER 2011



Wine cellar designs that put the 'fun' in 'functional'

9 AUGUST 2012



CONTRIBUTORS



SORREL MOSELEY-
WILLIAMS

Tasting & sipping her way through South America



JOHN MCNAMARA

Seasoned travel writer and destination connoisseur



FIONA BRUTSCHER

Connoisseur of cool with a serious case of wanderlust



TERRY WARD

Globe-trotter living the luxe life, pen in hand

The design of the café shouldn't be a corporate design. It should match the architecture of the neighbourhood it's in. Our cafes don't have WiFi - not because I want the focus to be on the coffee. I want you as an individual to have your focus on your coffee because you bought it. What I don't want it to be is a second workplace. We work enough. I think when you come into a café, come on - stop it.



What is your definition of gourmet coffee?

To me, gourmet coffee is a coffee selected and served with the idea of how it interacts with whatever experience you're having in terms of food or ambience. Even now, there's so much left that we can do to create a coffee experience at the table at a restaurant that is unbelievable. Coffee shouldn't mar the meal. It's the last thing you've done, the last song in a concert - make it a good one. It doesn't have to be paired with a food that you studiously figure out. I'll do that. I just want you to finish and have the coffee and then say, 'That was beautiful.'

Dangerous Grounds follows your exploits sourcing coffee globally. What's the best thing about starring in your own reality show?

The best thing about it is the "Ah-ha!" moment when I manage to brew a coffee that hits the packet of nerves in your head just right. As a roaster, I love creating that moment, and now TV is allowing me to create thousands of those moments for people.



You're planning another trekking adventure. Where and why?

I want to cross the hottest desert on earth: Death Valley. I'd like to hold the solo record across Antarctica, the coldest place on earth, and Death Valley, the hottest place on earth, at the same time. I think that would be cool.

More about Todd Carmichael and La Colombe at lacolombe.com



RELATED ARTICLES



FOOD & KITCHEN

> Blumenthal's New Brew



RESTAURANTS & BARS

> Extravagant, Exclusive, E ...



RESTAURANTS & BARS

> Top Five: London Afternoon ...

BACK TO TOP

SECTIONS

Travel
Gourmet
Style
Cars & Boats
Art & Culture
Home & Property
Tech
Your Magazine

DESTINATION GUIDES

Europe
Asia
Middle East & Africa
North America
Oceania
South America
CENTURION Destination Guides

YOUR MAGAZINE

Issue 2/2014
Issue 1/2014
Issue 4/2013
Issue 3/2013
Issue 2/2013
Issue 1/2013

ABOUT US

Advertising
Publishing Team
Magazine Team
Contact & Legal Notice
Privacy

