



FOR THE LOVE OF coffee

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF: SUMMER MOON COFFEE

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There is nothing like a piping hot cup of coffee on a cold day. For lovers of this flavorful, complex beverage, a little cup makes the world go ‘round. Freshly brewed grounds kickstart mornings, stop a midafternoon energy dip dead in its tracks and basically make any day complete. Likewise, at Summer Moon Wood Fired Coffee, coffee is a way of life. “My father-in-law and my brother-in-law really started the whole thing. They built the roaster from scratch from the ground up,” said Justin Terry, one of Summer Moon’s owners.

He described the man behind the machine, his father-in-law, Bruce Karnes, as a smart guy and an inventor. “He wanted to roast his own coffee. He’s always loved cooking over wood, and he thought that would be interesting to see. Can you roast coffee over a wood fire? He did some experiments, and it worked pretty good,” Terry said.

And so it began. In 2002, they opened a café that eventually turned into the roaster. The original roaster was run by hand, using zero gas or electricity. It took three people to roast every batch: usually Terry, his father-in-law, and brother-in-law Dustin Karnes. They each took four-minute turns, switching off, so no one would get too exhausted. Then they tried turning the wheels by peddling a stationary bike, as shown in an episode of The Cooking Channel’s *Man, Fire, Food*. The roaster is kept around 400 to 500 degrees, but even with the

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doors open and fans going, it gets hot. "It's the real deal. You have to get your mind right before you get in there and do it," Terry said.

Summer Moon only uses Texas post oak wood. After experimenting in the past with other local woods, they believe post oak to be the best for coffee roasting. According to Terry, it is a sweet, hard wood that burns to the perfect temperature, and while it does not add flavor to the coffee, it helps the coffee's own flavors burst through.

Starting with 34 pounds of beans, each batch takes about 23 minutes from beginning to end. The beans, green and obviously unroasted in the beginning, lose approximately 20 percent of their weight during the roasting process.

Some things have changed over the years due to expansion and the sheer volume of coffee produced. The company now has two roasters running five days a week. The bike is not peddled or wheeled by hand anymore, but they stay true to the original concept. The beans are roasted in the same way but with the assistance of a motor, and they still use local post oak wood and 100 percent organic beans. Not to worry: the taste remains the same with an equal amount of attention to detail and quality. "Gas and electric roasters, in our opinion, can tend to impart some bitterness, and our process doesn't. It's never bitter," Terry said.

Summer Moon offers over a dozen types of beans, each with its own unique flavor, painstakingly created with beautiful attention to detail. The possibilities are almost endless with beans from Nicaragua, Mexico, Peru, Columbia, Ethiopia, and places in between. They even serve their own special creamer concoction called Moon Milk that contains a secret ingredient Terry was understandably unwilling to share. They offer cappuccinos, espresso, americanos, teas, and lattes that are anything but basic.

"We have about ten single origins at any given time. We have a couple blends that are a standard that we always do. Velvet Blaze is the house blend, which is a medium-full-bodied roast. It has seven different origins blended in," Terry said.

His favorite? Like a true coffee lover, he cannot narrow it down to just one.

"The Velvet Blaze is always excellent, and that's why we brew it every day. And I always have an espresso. My favorite single origin is an Ethiopian. So flavorful," he said.

The company and family are making sure they are spreading their love of coffee with the world by expanding across the Lone

Star State and providing online ordering. There are currently over a dozen coffee shops from Austin to San Antonio to Dallas-Fort Worth, and they have no plans to cease expansion.

"We're definitely planning on still expanding. We just opened our shop in West Austin a couple weeks ago. From San Marcos up to central Austin and out to west Austin. We're really just kind of getting settled in with these," he said. "We may open a couple more in the Austin area, but we're looking to jump to another market."

The not-so-bad "bad" news? To taste Summer Moon's wood-fired goodness, guests must either order bagged coffee online or go to one of the coffee houses. Their product is not sold in stores. While Terry said to never say never, they currently have no plan to sell in local stores any time soon. They want to see smiling faces and share their love of coffee in person. So seek out a Summer Moon nearby and pre-order online. Order times are set every fifteen minutes, so those on the go do not have to wait.

Summer Moon Wood Fired Coffee started out as an experiment. Like anything worth working for, it has changed and adapted over the years, but a few things remain constant and never too far out of sight: Family first. Then coffee. And the love of those two things created an environment for this family to work alongside one another day in and day out, sharing with others their love of the complex beverage.

You need not be a connoisseur to enjoy a hand-crafted brew. Sure, you can have a regular cup of joe or, heaven forbid, an instant coffee. It will do the trick. But java lovers know that when they visit Summer Moon or brew the beans at home, they are getting a quality cup of coffee because it is made by people who love coffee. Life is too short to settle for anything less than the perfect cup of coffee.

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