



FOGBUSTER®
COFFEE WORKS
BY PIERCE BROS COFFEE



Greenfield, MA



Producer OF THE *Month*

APRIL 2021



BRATTLEBORO FOOD CO-OP

Producer ^{OF} THE *Month*

by Jon Megas-Russell



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Darren and Sean Pierce grew up in Amherst, MA, and both attended Springfield College. They loved their upbringing in Western Mass filled with hobbies, playing sports, and attending concerts. After completing their degrees at Springfield College they both worked in the restaurant industry, most often as waiters and bartenders. Darren moved to San Francisco in the early 1990's and while working as a bartender he started to learn about the specialty coffee movement, from both creating delicious offerings on an espresso machine and conversations with one of his regular customers. This regular customer happened to be a guy who worked with Peet's Coffee. Darren learned much from these talks and realized that the East Coast was not yet totally hip to specialty coffee. So when Darren decided to move back there he and his brother Sean began the process of opening a coffee roasting company called Pierce Bros Coffee.

With the production of gourmet coffee being a new industry on the East Coast 25 years ago, Darren and Sean were very excited to help jump start this movement. The first step was to experiment with



coffee roasting. Drum roasting was most accessible to them at the time, and so they started roasting with that technology. Darren did so much roasting in his apartment in Northampton during those early days he was evicted due to the stink and smell. With this experimentation they realized the burned flavor profiles that kept occurring when the beans were brewed did not meet their standards. So, they dug deeper with their research and found a lesser-known option called air roasting. Air roasting supposedly produced a smoother flavor, but the technology was not widely

available. In order to learn more, they scheduled some time with the pioneer of this technology, Michael Sivetz of Sivetz Coffee Company in Corvallis, OR. Michael is the creator and pioneer of air-roasting coffee beans, with over 300 of his roasters in use around the world. Darren, Sean, and their friends Peter and David Simpson of Haymarket Cafe in Northampton, all drove out to Oregon to meet with Michael. Their experience meeting with Michael was invaluable, and once back in Western Mass, they were convinced about using air roasting for their process. They spent the next few months raising money to purchase one of Michael's custom-built air roasters. Once they received the air roaster and it was assembled in their new coffee roasting space, they started to craft their premium roasts. Interestingly, their Fogbuster coffee roast was perfected very early on and still tastes practically the same today. As a fun side note, for a short time Peter and David almost joined Darren and Sean in this business, which would have been called "Brothers Coffee." However, once Peter and David realized how much work Darren and Sean put into operating their business, it never materialized.



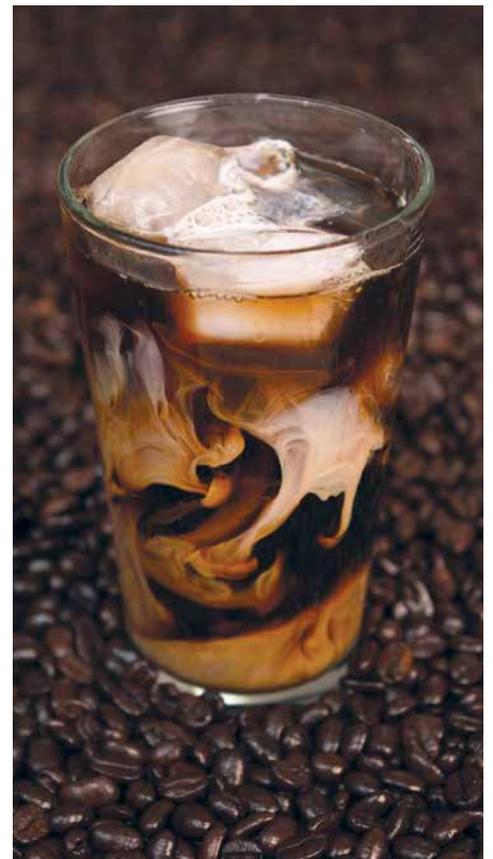
So what is air roasting? It is a cleaner, easier, more efficient way to turn green coffee beans into those delicious darkly roasted beans that we know and love to brew as coffee. During the process the beans are tossed and float continually in the hot air, allowing for an even roast on all sides. Darren and Sean state that air roasting “guarantees a consistent roast every time.” Visually, air roasting is similar to a popcorn popper, and controlling the air temperature keeps the beans from getting burned.

Additionally, as the beans roast, the outer skin called the chaff falls off of the beans and the air roaster removes them in the process. By removing the chaff and because the beans never touch the sides of the roaster, they do not burn—thus eliminating any bitter taste and enhancing the rich flavor. In a drum roaster, the beans are directly in contact with hot metal, sometimes causing the coffee beans to roast inconsistently, and the beans spend more time with the chaff on them. Leaving the chaff on the beans during the roasting process can also create a bitter or burned flavor. Coffee can be enjoyed whether air roasted or drum roasted, but the team at Pierce Bros take pride in their method and state that you can taste the difference from air roasting.

Since the inception of Pierce Bros Coffee, their coffee beans have been certified organic and 100% fair trade certified. “Integrity is our core value, in everything we do,” the brothers say. They only roast coffee beans



that are grown using no pesticides, herbicides, or synthetic fertilizers. Rigorous inspections of farms and meticulous record keeping has been essential to their commitment operating a USDA-certified organic and fair-trade roasting facility. Fair trade has also been key to their approach for acquiring beans as they work with mostly small farmers. Fair trade certified contracts ensure that farmers are paid a fair wage and are able to follow more sustainable growing practices. Prior to the





pandemic, Darren and Sean used to travel much more frequently to visit farms and witness exactly how and where their beans were being grown. They hope that once travel is safe and accessible again they can get back out to visit farmers in places such as Africa and South America. In addition to organic and fair-trade certification they are also certified Kosher and Kosher for Passover under the rabbinical supervision of Massachusetts Kosher Commission of Springfield, MA. Lastly, all chaff removed from the beans is used for fertilizer on local farms, and coffee bean bags are reused at nurseries. These are the many ways that Darren and Sean are committed to quality and sustainability with their coffee and business.

The pandemic has been a difficult time for Pierce Bros Coffee, as they received many calls from cafes and restaurants announcing that they were closing. This in turn decreased the amount of roasting and forced them to reduce the hours their staff worked. They have experienced an uptick in sales at co-ops and grocery stores as well as online sales, but overall they are still right-sizing their business to ensure they can succeed in the long term. One of the biggest ways in which they were affected over the past year was having to pause the rebrand on their entire business. During 2019 and early 2020, they had been working with the marketing, strategy, and design



firm Solidarity of Unbridled Labour out of Burlington, VT. In addition to working with Solidarity, the brothers spent many hours meeting with staff to help identify their theme and message. They settled on a new name for their company, Fogbuster Coffee Works by Pierce Bros Coffee. However, the lockdown that occurred last March put the release of this new name, new packaging, and new website on hold. As you read this, they are finally beginning to launch their new look and feel, with the same great commitment to quality. They are committed to the same roasts, same flavors, organic and fair trade but with deeper storytelling. The images in this article show both their old and new packaging. This look and feel was birthed from the popularity of their Fogbuster coffee roast, their staff's collective love for music and the outdoors, and the essence of their people. As they grow their new brand, it will feature photos of outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, and fishing. Their collective love for music can be seen in their new "air roasted" logo that features a guitar pick. Their website states, "Drink Responsibly My Friends; That Means Air Roasted,



Fair Trade and Organic!" Look for their new packaging, products, and website over the coming months, which will begin to feature their new name Fogbuster Coffee Works by Pierce Bros Coffee.

What does the future look like for Darren and Sean and the entire team at Fogbuster Coffee Works by Pierce Bros Coffee? First and foremost, they want to tell more stories about the farms they work with, take more trips, and bring the organic and fair-trade story to life. They want to celebrate their new launch with a block party—well, whenever people can gather for an event filled with music, food, and great coffee. As for new products, they have taken a few years to perfect a canned coffee called Fogbuster Nitro Cold Brew and they hope many co-ops, grocery stores, venues, and restaurants will offer this delicious new beverage. As sales hopefully increase again, their community impact will grow as well, particularly by supporting the Foodbank of Western Massachusetts and other initiatives that bring food to those who are in need. Darren and Sean are very excited for this next phase of Fogbuster Coffee Works. Bring your own container to the Bulk department and fill it with Fogbuster, Moka Java, or Black Bear. You can also order any of their coffee through Curbside Pickup at 802-246-2800, Monday–Friday.

