

Craft coffee conditioned in a cask in Saanichton

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First it was a Cold Draft Coffee than reminded drinkers of a stout — and now Saanichton's Fresh Cup Roastery is infusing its beans with the essence of additional spirits.

Owner Jim Townley has reached the end of a six-month experimentation and at the end of 2015, he revealed their unique process of infusing green coffee beans with spirits like honey mead, bourbon and rum.

“Back in the 1600s to 1700s, coffee used to be shipped in barrels and some of those were spiced or at one time carried alcohol,” Townley explained. “In those days, the coffee was thrown out, thinking it was

ruined.

“Green coffee is sensitive to absorbing flavours and aromas and today, it's typically shipped by itself in clean containers.”

Always looking for new and exciting ways to explore a craft coffee market, Townley said he was inspired by Victoria's strong craft brewing industry to take a risk on something new.

Instead of roasting the beans with flavours — as has been done before in such coffee beans as Irish Cream — Townley takes the green beans and ages them in barrels which once contained their spirit of choice.

He calls the process cask-conditioning and said it makes a special-occasion coffee bean — a coffee with the essence of the spirit, without the alcohol.



Photo contributed

Fresh Cup is always coming up with new takes on coffee. This time, it's beans infused with unique spirits.

“We use bourbon casks from Washington State, rinse them to make them neutral ... it's taken six months ironing out the

logistics of this.”

The green coffee beans are stored in the casks as they absorb the flavours of the spirits — such as Tug-

well Creek's honey mead, amber rum and bourbon. Townley added he's looking at additional flavours — some as a honey rum or

even a blackberry brandy from Central Saanich's DeVine Vineyards.

Townley said his honey mead infusion scored 93 points from Coffee Review, with the tasting notes: “fruit-toned spirits, crisp roasted cacao nib in aroma and cup, velvety mouth feel, long persistent finish.”

Fresh Cup had their first small batches of Cask Conditioned Craft Coffee ready for the holiday season, with the roasted beans packed into mini-growler bottles.

“People are always looking for new, unique tastes,” Townley said, noting he's hoping the idea takes off and other coffee roasters pick up on it and together, start a new trend in specialty coffee — not unlike how craft brewers have put the region on the map.



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