

 Seasonal cook


Photo: Steven Stewart

Baked beans

STEVE MANFREDI'S coffee-flavoured treats keep his espresso habit in check.

After years of expert warnings that coffee can damage health, an increasing number of studies claim it can be good for you. The latest suggests people who drink four to five cups a day live longer, with women cutting their risk of death by 16 per cent and men, 12 per cent.

The research, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, identifies a connection between increased coffee consumption and longevity in a large sample of men and women.

If you think it sounds a little too good to be true, you may be right. While the connection has been made statistically, proof is still a long way off and the researchers suggest testing the findings in a controlled clinical trial.

I used to drink four to five cups of espresso

every day but, I admit, I can't do it any more. Two is my limit before the edges of my vision begin to flicker and blur. Espresso kick-starts my day but if I have too much, it becomes difficult to focus.

There is a misconception that dark, concentrated and strong-tasting cups of espresso deliver a lot of caffeine, but in reality espresso contains less than coffee derived from most other extraction methods. That's because espresso beans usually contain less caffeine due to their higher quality. Instant coffee contains lower-quality beans and more caffeine. Under the espresso system, less caffeine is extracted during the brief steam-pressure process than it would be by boiling or percolation.

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ESPRESSO AND HAZELNUT CAKE

180g unsalted butter, softened, plus extra for greasing mould
200g self-raising flour, plus extra for dusting mould
50g hazelnuts, roasted and peeled
1 heaped tsp baking powder
200g castor sugar
4 eggs, separated
Pinch of salt
120ml espresso
100g hazelnut meal
1 tsp vanilla extract

Grease and dust a 23-centimetre ring mould (with a hole in the middle). Roughly chop hazelnuts. Sift together flour and baking powder in one bowl. In another, beat together butter and sugar. In a small bowl, whisk together egg yolks with salt. Slowly add this to butter and sugar, mixing well. Mix in sifted flour and baking powder, then espresso, hazelnut meal and vanilla. Whisk egg whites until they form firm peaks and fold into the mixture. Pour mixture into greased and floured cake mould. Sprinkle chopped hazelnuts on top and bake in a preheated 180C oven for 45 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool for 5 minutes before turning out onto a cooling rack. Once cooled completely it can be served with espresso custard, made by mixing 2 espresso shots with 250ml of custard. **Serves 8-10 as dessert (pictured)**
Wine Tawny port or Rutherglen muscat

BAKED COFFEE CREAM

Panela sugar is obtained by slowly heating pure cane juice until it solidifies. It is then ground to a fine powder. It is also known as rapadura in Brazil and jaggeri in India. If unobtainable, use brown sugar.

5 whole eggs plus 3 yolks
320g castor sugar
1 litre milk
250ml espresso
1 tsp panela sugar
1 tsp very finely ground coffee beans

Beat eggs, yolks and sugar together until pale and creamy. Heat milk and espresso together until almost boiling. Whisk hot espresso milk into egg and sugar mixture until well dissolved. Place liquid into 6 individual moulds and place moulds in an ovenproof dish. Pour hot water into dish carefully so water level comes up to liquid level in the moulds. Place in a preheated 90C oven for 35 minutes, until a crust forms on top of each mould. Remove carefully and let cool. Mix panela sugar and finely ground coffee together and sprinkle on top of each baked cream. Serve just warm or at room temperature. **Serves 6 as dessert**
Wine Moscato di pantelleria passito or muscat de beaumes de venise

 Full bottle

QUAFFING

PAXTON AAA SHIRAZ
GRENACHE 2010, \$20

Paxton is a McLaren Vale producer that uses biodynamic farming. This is a juicy, ripe red, with the savoury spice notes and grainy tannins of grenache complementing the fleshiness of shiraz. There is a core of bright fruit, fresh acidity and luscious tannins. It needs air to tease out the mocha and savoury characters. Medium-bodied with a hint of cedary oak, it is a delicious, easy-drinking red and a ripper match to pea and ham soup. A really satisfying drink with a bargain price.



TRYING

FREEMAN RONDINELLA
CORVINA SECCO
2008, \$29

Amarone, a dry Italian red, is made from rondinella and corvina grapes. The structure of the wine inspired Brian Freeman of Freeman Vineyards to plant the Italian varieties. The tannins are distinct and there are layers of earthy fruit sweetness, with sour cherry, fruit cake, leather and spice. It is very fresh, with plenty of tannic acidity and a super-long finish. This is a bargain, considering it spends two years ageing in old oak barrels and another two in the bottle. Perfect with a mushroom-beef ragu.



CELLARING

JOHN DUVAL WINES
ENTITY SHIRAZ 2010, \$46

A mix of mostly Barossa Valley fruit with some shiraz from the Eden Valley, this is a deep, earthy red. It is concentrated but also has prettiness. A full-bodied wine, it is spicy and luscious without being heavy. It dances with dark berries, plums and some cedary oak, the flavours distinct but still harmonious. With velvety and precise tannins and fine acidity, this will age easily for 10 years or more. If opened now, match with braised beef cheeks cooked in some of the wine.

Jane Faulkner

