

A person's habits (or, more rudely, addictions) can tell you a lot about them. I am hopelessly in the thrall of liquid $C_8H_{10}N_4O_2$, and every morning a bright red machine delivers it one shot at a time into my waiting cup. Pretty standard stuff for an adult in the world in 2022, you say? Alright, let me explain how this *particular* machine and the compound it produces help describe me.

First, note that I'm not talking about a standard drip coffee pot. There's a time and a place for drip coffee, and it's in the summer at your 100 year-old cabin that doesn't have insulation, full walls, TV, internet, or heat without building a fire in the fireplace, but does have incredible access to white powdered Donettes at the grocery store in town ten miles away. No cabin, no Donettes, no drip. Meaning: for fifty-one weeks a year I drink espresso. And not that swill that Starbucks calls coffee drinks, all whipped cream and chemicals. Give me the straight stuff: one shot of caffeine, one of water. Maybe some ice. I'm a purist. Or a snob, depending on who's doing the judging. Probably both.

Next, note the color of this machine: it's red. Who needs a red espresso maker? Am I trying to prove that my coffee is somehow more aggressive, passionate, hot-blooded than yours? No, though it's true that I can get a little intense sometimes. Really, though, I like red because it has personality. Why blend in with the chromes and blacks or limp along behind the trends like the coppers and rose golds? I'll go my own way and proudly, thanks.

But let's get more associational. Legend has it that coffee was first roasted and brewed in Ethiopia or Yemen, but everybody knows that in this country it was perfected in Seattle. I am a proud Seattleite living here in California due to my wife's position as a Ph.D student at UC Davis. She studies volcanoes and is the brains of the family. I am the mouth. Like the best coffee, we are from mountains and trees and salt water and gray skies and rain. Although we like Sacramento a lot and may even stay here forever, you can keep your In-N-Out, your Republic FC, your smoke, and your 105 degree heat. I will admit, though, that your Scorpio, Insight, Identity, and Chocolate Fish cafes are pretty solid. Temple? A little harsh.

I can share an espresso with my wife at home or with friends all over the world, since people drink it everywhere. I encourage you to travel and to talk to people when you do: the times I've spent in China, France, and even in other parts of the US have broadened my mind and helped me develop empathy and understanding for people who are not at all like me. And if it's anything we could all use right now, it's more empathy and open minds.

And probably another cup of coffee.