



THE AMERICAN OBSESSION

Why we drink 400 million cups a day

by KAREN FERNAU

10.8 million people list coffee as one of their interests on Facebook

Event planner Gabriel Zahoney begins his work day with 20 ounces of a dark roasted brew at a downtown Phoenix coffee shop.

The 38-year-old, who in less than a decade graduated from instant to full-bodied European coffee, never deviates. "I start every day with a cup," Zahoney said.

So do an increasing number of Americans. About 83 percent of adults drink coffee in the U.S., the world's biggest consumer of the beverage, up from 78 percent a year earlier, according to the National Coffee Association's 2013 online survey. That's an average of three cups a day per person, or 400 million cups.

The only weak spot: volatile young drinkers, who last year drank less coffee.

"You could say this nation runs on two dark liquids — petroleum and coffee," said Bob Thompson, a professor of popular culture at Syracuse University who once taught a course on Starbucks and the coffee phenomenon.

"Thousands of people are lubricated and made mobile by coffee every single day."

Coffee is more than just a shot of caffeine. It's a \$30 billion-a-year national industry, a foodie fixation, an affordable luxury, a boost of disease-fighting antioxidants, a versatile ingredient, an intoxicating aroma and a beverage that brings people

together.

Industry experts credit a handful of diverse factors driving coffee's escalating popularity. The most cited is the growth in hot-selling home-brewing gadgets, with single-serve coffee makers leading the pack. Other strong factors: gourmet offerings, coffeehouses with hip appeal and health

benefits.

"Coffee has become important to us on so many levels and there's no signs its cachet is going away any time soon," said Joe DeRupo, National Coffee Association president. "It's part beverage, another part pop culture."

According to the recent NCA survey, consumption

continue to next page »

GRABBING A CUP OF COFFEE IS THE **#1 THING** AMERICANS DO IN THE MORNING

2010 2011
Specialty coffee sales

2012 2013 2014
are increasing by 20 percent each year