



Master of the brew

Good coffee is made with finesse – a key ingredient lacking in many cafes, says coffee expert Instaurator. [Karen Milliner](#) reports.

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THE topic is coffee, and the man sitting opposite is something of a walking encyclopaedia on the subject. But before we get on to beans and brews, there's something that needs to be dispensed with: his name.

"Hi, people call me Inni," the 46-year-old had greeted me as he strode into the room with a warm smile and his hand extended in welcome.

But that's the shortened version. His name is Instaurator – just the one word, neither first name nor surname really, although he's been quaintly referred to in the media as "Mr Instaurator".

He was born Will Forsyth, but changed his name by deed poll about five years ago. The new one is taken from the Forsyth clan motto "Instaurator ruinae" which means a restorer of ruins.

The name change was not a decision the married father of four, who lives on the central coast of New South Wales, made lightly. It came about from his spiritual beliefs.

"I thought about it for a couple of years – it was a feeling that it was just something I had to do," he says. "It was a bit surreal, walking into the Office of Birth, Deaths and Marriages and filling out the paperwork. Most people are OK with it but Mum still can't use it."

His brother Rob Forsyth, chairman of the AustralAsian Specialty Coffee Association, says he also still calls his sibling "Will".

It was Rob who seems to have inspired Inni's interest in coffee.

Inni was at university in Sydney studying for his Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in history. During uni holidays he began helping out Rob, who had started his own roasting operation.

Once he completed his degree, Inni immersed himself full-time in the coffee trade, from wholesaling to restaurants through to retailing, joining forces with Rob and a cousin in the company, Danbrew.

In the late 1990s Inni was approached by Michel's Patisserie to set up an espresso arm of their company.

"I had this espresso bar in Neutral Bay in Sydney and it was in a district where buildings were earmarked for demolition. Lots of other businesses had already moved out," Inni says.

"The Michel's people looked inside the window one day and saw that despite everything else being deserted, there were people three deep lining up for coffee, so they thought there had to be something in it.

"They persuaded me to set up Michel's Espresso. We set up a roasting facility and training for baristas in each franchise outlet.

"It was quite a challenge for me going from the gourmet end of the market to a mass market."

One of the biggest problems he faced with training – particularly in Queensland, he says – was convincing people of the correct temperature to heat milk and serve coffee.

"You can't go past 65C with milk because it breaks down the sugars and the milk won't be as sweet," he says.

"The temperature thing is a hangover from the instant coffee heyday. People got used to pouring boiling water into a cup."

Inni's input and expertise clearly paid off handsomely for Michel's. After he devised the in-house blend, coffee sales across all patisserie outlets rose by 40 per cent in the first year.

The Michel's Espresso facility at South Granville employs sophisticated technology, including a spectrophotometer for precise and consistent roast colours, and earlier this year Michel's in-house blend was voted favourite espresso blend at the Western Regional Barista Guild Jam held in California and hosted by the Specialty Coffee Association of America, the world's largest coffee trade association.

For the past few years Inni has been heavily involved in the world barista championships. He was a judge at the 2002 event held in Oslo, Norway, and the following year roasted a special blend for Australian finalist Paul Bassett, and helped with his training. Bassett won the championship.

"It's been great watching how Paul has developed," Inni says. "He's now exploring how roasting affects the flavours of coffee and what goes into a blend and what's the flavour you want to achieve."

He would like to see baristas become 'coffee Nazis' who would never let a coffee go out to a customer unless it was perfect

"If you want some chocolate you might add some Brazilian beans, or Guatemalan for intense fruit, or sweeten it with a delicate Nicaraguan."

"That's the way we have to get people thinking about coffee, like we do with wine. As less of a commodity and more of a quality product with distinctive characteristics. As a cup of excellence."

These days Inni has scaled down his involvement with the barista championships. He will be going to the next world titles in the United States, but to observe not judge.

What he would like to see is baristas in all cafes, restaurants and other outlets become "coffee Nazis" who would never let a coffee go out to a customer unless it was perfect.

"That way," he says, "the quality improves across the board."

Inni's latest coffee collaboration is with Andrew Ford of Mountain Top Coffee near Nimbin in northern NSW, who is pioneering new coffee harvesting and processing techniques.

"He came to me with the idea that he wanted to develop the Grange Hermitage of coffee. So I've been tasting and giving him advice," he says.

"There's only a handful of farms worldwide doing the levels of sophisticated production he's doing, and he's had Brazil's best coffee engineer come out to advise him and set up for next year's harvest. He's pitting his coffee against the best of the world and seeing how it stacks up on a world stage."

"That to me is appealing, that international challenge."

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