

THE Northern Star



SWEET SUCCESS: Andrew Ford, general manager of Mountain Top Coffee at Nimbin, toasts the opening in Venice of an Italian market

Nimbin coffee takes on world's best

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COFFEE has become big business in Nimbin.

The 20-hectare Mountain Top Coffee farm west of the town has just become the first in Australia to export to Italy's espresso market.

Its produce will now be served in the renowned Cafe Del Doge coffee house in Venice, placing it in the top echelon of single estate coffees from around the world.

Earlier this year, Mountain Top Coffee sold its entire 2004 crop to export markets and speciality coffee roasters in North America, Europe and Asia.

The affluent Harrods department store in London now also has Mountain Top Coffee on its shelves.

And with a \$176,000 Federal Government grant to expand, Mountain Top will be able to employ another seven people over the next three years, making it Nimbin's largest employer.

Mountain Top each year produces about 40 tonnes of single estate green coffee, which is not roasted. It is one of the highest grades of coffee available.

Single estate coffee is certified to be grown on one farm and is very rare. More than 99 per cent of the world's coffees are blended.

General manager Andrew Ford said Mountain Top was exporting beans all over the world, including the huge North American market.

"But to have the country where espresso originated serving our coffee as a single estate espresso is very exciting," he said.

"Cafe Del Doge founder Bernie della Mea is a maverick in the Italian espresso industry and his roasting and barista methods have made him an authority in the European market.

"His cafe relies on locals, not tourists, to drive their coffee sales, and he says only the finest beans from around

the globe are on his menu."

Since putting its first coffee trees in five years ago, Mountain Top has earned such a reputation that its coffee was used by the first and third place baristas at the world barista titles.

At next year's championships — in Berne, Switzerland — Mr Ford believes his company will be supplying competitors from Australia, Canada, Norway and the UK.

Mountain Top rarely supplies domestic outlets, but locals can try Mountain Top Coffee at Nimbin's Rainbow Cafe under the Cafiend brand.

"We choose our business partners carefully to try to match philosophies," Mr Ford said.

"We're not in the business of flogging coffee. We're about taking coffee drinking to a new level."

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