

Connoisseur's coffee coup

by Sonia Bojorge

COFFEE lovers wouldn't dream of starting the day without a fresh brew in their hands.

But, for Kenton Campbell, the day begins and ends with coffee.

As founder of Zarraffas Coffee, a Gold Coast business that roasts gourmet coffee on its premises and serves dozens of variations of the drink, Kenton lives and breathes coffee.

It's more than a drink, he says.

"It is an experience. It's that whole thing where you sit down, you smell it, you take a first sip and you lose yourself in that cup of coffee.

"It is something that brings together people from all walks of life."

Zarraffas was named after a giraffe, symbolising Ethiopia, where coffee originated.

The coffee bean has since travelled the world, adopted by many cultures.

And Kenton, the former Seattle espresso cart operator, has made his fortune riding the wave of the coffee culture that hit Australia.

He says Zarraffas Coffee originated in Southport as a tiny wholesaling roastery that started serving cups of coffee to locals.

"People would drink it sitting on coffee bags."

Kenton, 30, has been in the coffee trade since he was 20.

Born in California, the self-taught entrepreneur left school at 14 and started in food and beverage jobs.

By the time he was 25, Kenton owned and operated espresso carts

around Seattle, in the US state of Washington.

The bustling city, with over 3000 coffee bars and 600 espresso carts, is a coffee capital, he says.

In 1995 Kenton came to Australia as a coffee consultant.

"I was asked to come to the Gold Coast by the Australian Retail Food Group, but they withdrew their offer."

Kenton, however, decided to stay.

"It was fate," he said.

After being injured in a car accident, Kenton was forced to stay in Australia to recover, but fell in love with his massage therapist and now fiancée, Rachel Hicks.

"I also fell in love with the Gold Coast and the way of life here."

However, he decided the coffee needed some improvement.

"I went around tasting coffee and thought I would do something about it," he said.

In 1996, Kenton and Hicks opened a wholesaling roastery on Pinter Drive in Southport, serving coffee to the public, due to popular demand.

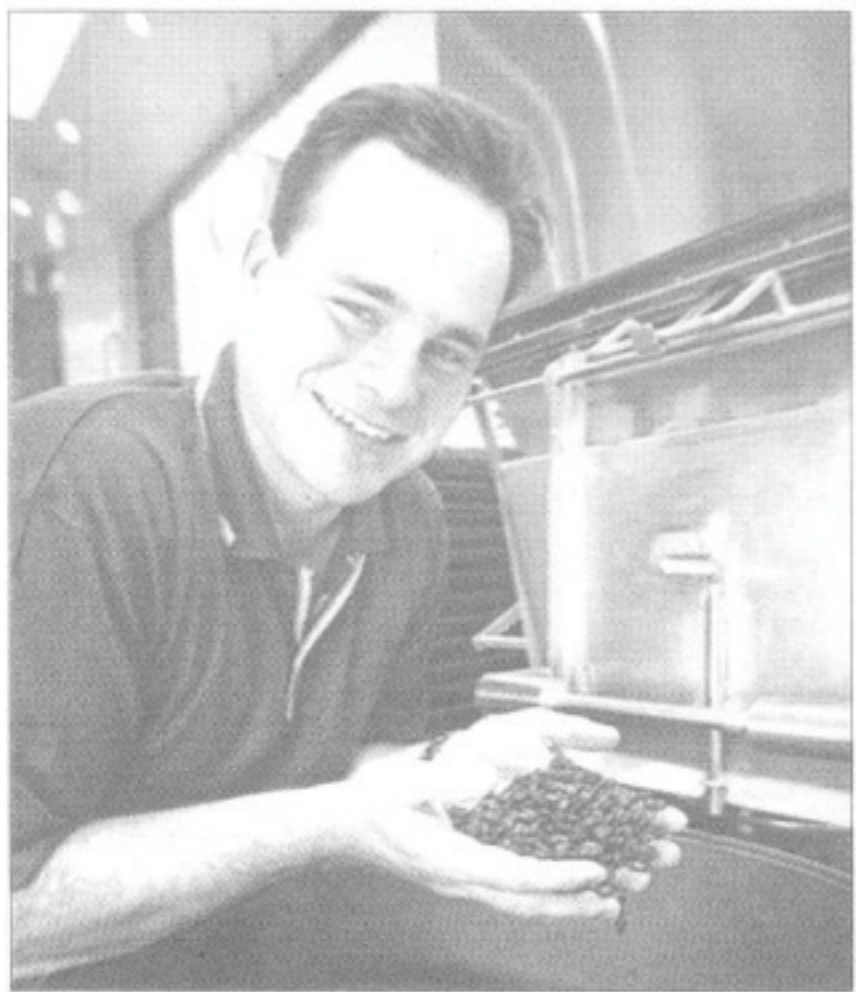
"People would smell the coffee roasting and come in and ask for it.

"On Saturdays, we sold hundreds (of cups)," said Kenton.

Zarraffas Coffee then expanded to Australia Fair shopping centre and continues to sell only coffee and coffee products without food – a formula that many said would never work.

Kenton opened the second Zarraffas outlet at Harbour Town shopping centre last year.

He has now decided to franchise the business and has plans to open



Kenton Campbell – coffee is more than a drink

Brisbane and Sunshine Coast outlets.

The business this year turned over more than \$1 million, compared with \$110,000 in its first year in 1996.

The secret to the business' success is simple, according to Kenton.

"It's good coffee. We order the best from an importer in Sydney and roast it fresh."

Places from which beans are sourced

include Colombia, Guatemala, Brazil and Papua New Guinea, and parts of Africa.

So what constitutes the perfect cup?

It should be freshly roasted and freshly ground, but there is no one perfect cup, says Kenton.

"Everyone likes theirs differently.

"There are so many variables and so many different ways."