



## A Dream Of Coffee

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E Huiyuan: Ten years ago, you opened the company with your friends, which once aroused certain interest of some Chinese media. It is not so easy for a foreigner to state his own business from scratch in China, why did you choose to do that?

Stuart Eunson: We saw a tremendous potential market here in Beijing, for coffee, and so we pursued that market. When we first started the company, we completely misjudged the local Beijing market. We expected there to be much more demand for gourmet quality coffee and that wasn't the fact. We had to work much harder than we originally thought. Actually when we started the business in 1994, we were hoping to sell coffee to the 200,000 plus foreigners in Beijing, and it turned out that market did not exist in the form we thought it was. And so we were focused to sell coffee in a much more local Beijing market. And actually, when first came up the idea, we did not know much about coffee. Once we decided that we wanted to invest in coffee in China, I went to be an intern with coffee roasters in U.S.; my two friends who came from Australia went back to Australia to be an intern there. When we decided to start a coffee roaster, we learned everything we could do about coffee. Coffee is a life time of experiences; so you never stop learning. But to learn how to roast coffee takes about a month, maybe two months, to learn how to toast coffee well takes a long long time, just like tea.

E: What is the greatest achievement you have made after so many years' work in China? Any special thoughts or feeling about your work here?

Stuart Eunson: Still alive for 10 years in China coffee market is the achievement by myself. I would say that one of the biggest achievements is that we have worked hard and saw great fruits in the education of Chinese coffee customer. Although our efforts are not as great as someone like Nestle, when people are interested in coffee, we teach them about coffee. We like to think that through our training, people know more about coffee, and that they really learn to appreciate coffee. And one thing that touched my deepest heart was—when we started the company in 1994, we almost starved to death. We completely misjudged the coffee market here like I was saying; we really thought that we were going to be rich within 6 months. That did not happen. And so overtime as we developed the business, we had to be very creative with how we solved the problems here. Basic principles are the same everywhere in the world, but the way you go about solving a problem here in China is very different than other places in the world. And be able to maintain the business as a small sized enterprise to survive in coffee market for ten years when different companies come into China, some big, some small. It is really a source of pride. It is very challenging to run a business in China.

E: Chinese people like to drink tea, and we have an age-old tea culture. Coffee is the traditional drink of western people, is there anything so called "coffee culture"?

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Stuart Eunson: Tea has 2,000 years of history. Coffee, worldwide, also has the same way. It has affected countries all over the world. It is a drink that is drunk all over the world. The story discovery of coffee is very similar to the discovery of tea in China. There are various fanciful but unlikely stories surrounding the discovery of roasted coffee beans. One story has it that an Ethiopian goatherd was amazed at the lively behavior of his goats after chewing red coffee berries. The culture of coffee-drinking goes back to the 11th century. It was then that coffee was first imported to Arabica from its original home in Ethiopia. The Persians were enraptured by the invigorating effects of this new “wine of Islam,” because real wine was strictly forbidden to Muslims. The word “coffee” comes from the ancient Arabica “qahwah.” In the first half of the 16th century, coffee came to play an increasingly important role in many places of the world. Coffee is the single largest consumed drink in the world. And tea is the single largest consumed drink in China. In China, there are hundreds of different types of teas that are very different. In coffee, there are over thousands of different types of coffee in the world. Overall, yes I’d say that there are a lot of similarities between tea and coffee.

E: In talking about coffee, such established brands as “Nestle” and “Starbucks” maybe are more familiar to Chinese people. How does Arabica coffee differentiate itself?

Stuart Eunson: Nestle is world largest food company. Nestle Coffee is worldwide, but one is larger than others. For us, I think as you look at, Nestle is instant coffee, we do only roasting coffee. Starbucks is a coffee retailer, they open coffee shop all over China, especially in large cities. We focus mainly on wholesale coffee. We provide gourmet quality coffee, and high quality coffee in high services.

E: Nowadays, college students in China are facing severe employment pressure. Some of them plan to settle this problem by starting their own business. Do you have any suggestion or advice for them?

Stuart Eunson: To do that you really want to do. At first, you may try different jobs. And you will find out that one job is most suited for you. Choose what you like, it is very important. Of course, if you want to start your own business, you will face a lot of difficulties. There is one thing that you must bear in mind—never give up.