

## Coffee

Would you like a cup of coffee dear? My mother asked with a gentle concern when she found me behind the ironing board at 6:30 in morning.

I looked up from ironing my gym clothes and smiled. I don't remember what my answer was ... but I knew I had arrived. The morning sun was streaming in through the kitchen window, I was in the eighth grade, and at that unforgettable moment, I had been invited into "the club." A club I had been attending to but never participated in since my earliest years.

Coffee was an important part of my family's morning ritual so at a very young age, I was taught how to prepare the prized liquid. It had to be perked just right ... just enough of the almost sweet smelling grounds went into the gray metal holder filled with holes where the water would pulse through. As I would light the gas stove the first flame would come on with a whoosh ... starting the journey that would lead to a fresh cup of hot aroma filled deep black coffee being delivered to my parents in their bed.

And timing was everything ... perked too little, and weak, pale, watery liquid was the result. Perked too much, and what ended up in your cup was a deep, black, almost burned substance that would pucker your lips and twitch your nose. It was an art ... and I had perfected it by the time I was eight. At the perfect moment, the tall hot pot on the stove would be rapidly vibrating with the rich liquid surging through its small glass submarine widow on its top ... and I would "know" the time was now.

Almost like a beautifully choreographed dance, I'd turn off the stove's knob and extinguish the blue white flame that was now surrounding the bottom of the pot; grab the handle of the vessel that held the liquid gold, and pour with confidence into the awaiting cups. The gentle steam, and full wafting aroma filling my nose would let me know that I had been successful.

I took THAT pride of preparation, and keen recognition of the perfect brew, with me throughout the years ... no matter what the newest pot de jour was that swept the world.

Drip, french, hobo, automatic, pre-set — I've used them all ... and on several continents: Be it on land — or at sea ... in the rising heat of the desert's sun — or atop cold showy mountains. The place and method of preparation may differ, but using one's instinct in mastering the final result is always a vital element. Like an orchestra and its eager audience breathlessly connecting when the first perfect note is played — That first hot solid taste of fresh coffee reaching your awaiting lips tells you everything you need to know about the experience before you.

And when that experience starts off your day, it quite literally grounds you. Hands around that warm cup spreads more than heat throughout your semi-conscious body. It is a ritual that awakens you to the possibilities of a day that has yet to be written.