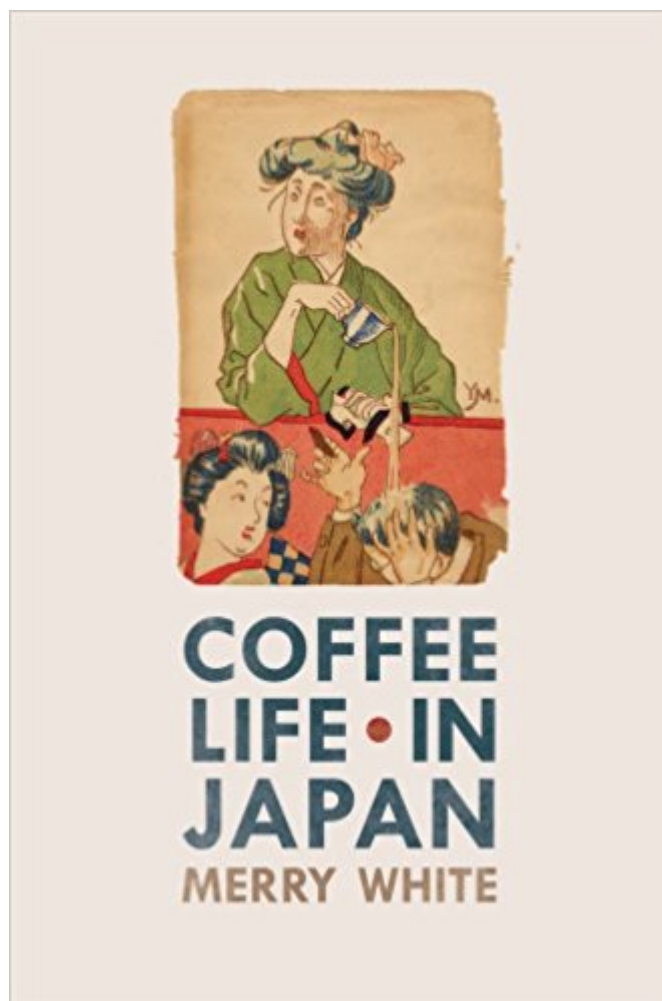


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Coffee Life In Japan



Synopsis

This fascinating book—part ethnography, part memoir—traces Japan's vibrant café society over one hundred and thirty years. Merry White traces Japan's coffee craze from the turn of the twentieth century, when Japan helped to launch the Brazilian coffee industry, to the present day, as uniquely Japanese ways with coffee surface in Europe and America. White's book takes up themes as diverse as gender, privacy, perfectionism, and urbanism. She shows how coffee and coffee spaces have been central to the formation of Japanese notions about the uses of public space, social change, modernity, and pleasure. White describes how the café in Japan, from its start in 1888, has been a place to encounter new ideas and experiments in thought, behavior, sexuality, dress, and taste. It is where a person can be socially, artistically, or philosophically engaged or politically vocal. It is also, importantly, an urban oasis, where one can be private in public.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Required reading for coffee's true believers and industry insiders.” (Oliver Strand T: The New York Times Style Magazine 2012-12-14)
“You'll find your eyes opened beyond the new and storied cafes you've heard of and into regional corners and paradoxical tastes.” (Serious Eats 2012-08-29)
“A fascinating 130-year illumination of Japan's deeply rooted sipping culture.” (LA Weekly 2012-10-18)
“This excellent book combines academic rigour with lively descriptions and compelling prose.” (Times Higher Education 2012-07-26)
“Provides an engaging and often personal account of Japanese

coffeehouses. . . . Highly recommended. (R. R. Wilk, Indiana University Choice 2012-12-01) "Merry White has whiled away many hours in cafés in Japan in her professional role as an anthropologist, and wishes to communicate the diversity and intimacy one can experience in them. (Times Literary Supplement (TLS) 2012-11-23) "Perhaps this isn't really a review, more a recommendation. All I can really say is that I enjoyed it, and . . . you'll probably enjoy this too. (Jimseven 2012-09-01) "This book will certainly give you . . . a lot of new knowledge and maybe a whole new perspective on Japanese culture. (Yum 2012-11-01) "Coffee Life in Japan provides a novel and significant study on contemporary Japanese life. (Willa Zhen, Culinary Institute of America Journal Of American-East Asian Relations 2013-04-09)

“Cafes are where change happens and people feel most themselves. In this surprising book we see how Japan came of age in the café; where women became free, where people jazz and poetry could reign. And, of course, where coffee is at its perfectionist best. Always a congenial companion and teacher, Merry White shows us a whole society in a beautifully made cup.” Corby Kummer, The Atlantic; Merry White's book is vital reading for anyone interested in culture and coffee, which has a surprising and surprisingly long history in Japan. Tracing the evolving role of the country's cafes, and taking us on armchair visits to some of the best, White makes us want to board a plane immediately to sample a cup brewed with kodawari, a passion bordering on obsession. “Devra First, The Boston Globe” Coffee Life in Japan features highly engaging history and ethnographic detail on coffee culture in Japan. Many readers will delight in reading this work. White provides an affectionate, deeply felt, well reasoned book on coffee, cafes, and urban spaces in Japan.” Christine Yano, author of Airborne Dreams: “Nisei” Stewardesses and Pan American World Airways” Combining unmistakable relish for the subject with decades of academic expertise, Merry White skillfully demonstrates that the café, not the teahouse, is a core space in urban Japanese life. Her portrait of their endurance, proliferation, and diversity aptly illustrates how coffee drinking establishments accommodate social and personal needs, catering to a range of tastes and functions. It is a lovely and important book not only about the history and meanings of Japan's liquid mojo, but also about the creation of new urban spaces for privacy and sociality.” Laura Miller, author of Beauty Up: Exploring Contemporary Japanese Body Aesthetics

I read this from start to finish in a day. I couldn't put it down. Not only was it a fascinating exploration of the history and role of coffee culture in Japan, it offered up some places we could visit. (Which we did!). I love this book! I was even able to talk about coffee to my Japanese coffee maniac friends about stuff even they didn't know!

Thick with clear understanding of both Japan and Coffee. Very good but long read. Read this while traveling in Japan to a Coffee Show and visiting Coffee Roasters and Cafes. I was surprised how accurate and insightful this book was on both topics.

Excellent reading material for those who are interested in the history of coffee and/or Japan. The focus is on the story of coffee and its impact in Japan and the evolution of the cafe, coffee shop. The first few chapters give a good overview of the 1930s cafes as well as the introduction of the beverage to Japan in the late seventeenth century. The Japanese took coffee and made it a national drink that is unique to the country. The post war period saw the proliferation of the coffee shop and different varieties such as jazz or theme cafes. The modern coffee shop (from the seventies to today) offer even more variations even though the small traditional cafe seems to be the first choice for most. Corporate coffee chains like Starbucks find out what matters to the Japanese consumer is good quality coffee and the blends of different varieties of bean as well as the individual atmosphere of a Japanese cafe. The most interesting chapter is the one concerning Japan and its influence on the international coffee market. The best coffee from Brazil is purchased by the Japanese coffee companies and the price paid influences the second tier price for other beans that are bought by other countries. The book is interesting for history readers also as the author manages to convey a distinct tone for the chronicle of the role of coffee and the coffee shop in twentieth century Japan. The future is bright for the coffee consumer and the cafe proprietor.

Note: the Japanese style coffee shop now has come to America in NYC and San Francisco.

Bought this for my father who is a coffee drinker and recently traveled to Japan. He wasn't blown away by the information in the book but he enjoyed reading it. He didn't recommend reading it myself.

If you're wondering how someone could write a whole book about coffee in Japan, part of the answer is that it's incredibly repetitive. It almost reads like a collection of articles instead of a book, because the author seems to repeat many of her facts and observations in nearly every chapter. Or

maybe she just thinks her readers are incredibly forgetful? If the topic sounds intriguing, and in particular if you haven't read much about Japanese social history, you'll definitely learn something, but it should have been shorter and better structured to cut down on redundancy. Other than that, though, it's quite readable for a book by an academic. She throws in bits of jargon once in a while, but they pass quickly, and I think there's only one reference to Foucault, so I have to give her credit for that.

Haven't read such bad writing in a long time. An interesting topic killed by sloppy writing. If your library has it and you're going to Japan, take a look. But reading the same ideas slightly rephrased (along with quite a few unsupported claims, end notes notwithstanding) was painful. It could have been nicely condensed to a long article.

Coffee life in Japan was so interesting and informative, that I had a hard time putting it down. It is extremely well researched, covering the history of coffee in Japan. Included in the book are profiles of several coffee masters and the techniques they use to make the supreme cup of coffee. It is the coffee masters life work to make the best cup of coffee possible. Although it didn't surprise me, I didn't realize that coffee making, had reached such a high level. I'm anxious to go back to Japan and visit a few of the shops mentioned in this book.

In a country known for its rich and ancient tea culture, I found this account of its phenomenal coffee culture--which I have had the pleasure experiencing first-hand-- just fascinating!

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