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Nutrition For The Weekend Warrior

Dallas Clouatre, PhD

Naturally Improving Prostate Health

Gene Bruno, MS, MHS

Coffee Has Its Health Benefits If You Know Your Brew

Bob Arnot, MD

GLA: The Forgotten Omega For Healthy, Glowing Skin

Ann Louise Gittleman, PhD, CNS

10 Tips

For Healthy Aging in Men

Elson M. Haas, MD

MAY 2016

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Coffee Has Its Health Benefits If You Know Your Brew

Bob Arnot, MD



The end of the Stand Up Paddling World Championship race is brutal. The ocean tosses racers around like a washing machine combining an enormous northeast wind swell, an even bigger south swell, raging currents and waves ricocheting off Oahu and smashing into the infamous China wall with a huge plume of salt spray jetting into the air. Winds can hit 35 knots with swell heights of 20 feet. The Kaivi channel between Molokai and Oahu is billed the most dangerous ocean passage in the world and this event is one the greatest challenges of all endurance races. As I bore down the home stretch after 32 grueling miles I had energy to spare. In fact I never felt better. Why? I was using a new fuel for the race that may surprise you, high performance coffee.

For centuries coffee had been a taste treat and pick me up. Now a new era is dawning, that of performance coffees. Little wonder, a study of 229,119 men published in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*¹ established an association between coffee drinking and disease prevention, including

an impressive 10 percent decrease in all causes of death for men drinking up to six cups a day. The U.S. government's 2015 dietary guidelines² stated: "Consistent evidence indicates that coffee consumption is associated with reduced risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease in adults." It concludes: "Moderate coffee consumption can be incorporated into a healthy dietary pattern, along with other healthful behaviors."

The Science Behind What Makes Coffee Healthy

Hundreds of journal articles³ have linked coffee drinking to decreases in the risk of heart disease, diabetes, many cancers, Alzheimer's disease and depression. But the million-dollar question has been: What makes coffee so healthy? The answer is polyphenols. These powerful anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant compounds are the most important health component of coffee, just as they are in the freshest fruits and vegetables, fine red wines and premium green teas. But only coffee has them in the highest amount in the typical American diet.

Inflammation is a major driving force behind many illnesses from heart disease to depression. The major polyphenols in coffee are called chlorogenics and they give coffee its zing and effervescence. Studies show that coffee is an exceptional transport mechanism for chlorogenics, which are absorbed into the blood stream and can improve, measured anti-oxidant levels.

The trouble though is that many coffees have few chlorogenics or polyphenols. One paper⁴ measured the range of chlorogenics from as low as 6 mg a cup to as high as 188 mg. I asked myself a simple question. If coffee is so good for you, why not make it truly great? Why not make it the best thing most people do in a day?

The Hunt for the Best Performance Coffee

So I undertook a worldwide hunt for the very finest coffee varieties, grown in the perfect microclimate. I found the finest at high altitudes in Kenya and Ethiopia where the bean is challenged to be its best. Then I subjected these beans to advanced analytical testing in a top laboratory using sophisticated liquid chromatography and mass spectrometry instruments and comparing them to many well-known commercial coffees. I expected perhaps a 10 percent difference. What I found was truly staggering: Coffee beans with as much as 28,193 mg per kilogram of the key chlorogenics in a roasted coffee. That's compared to as little as 1,968 mg per kilogram in some off-the-shelf coffees.

Polyphenols are also the newest phenomenon in performance sports. Why? Intense exercise expends huge amounts of oxidants, which may impair speed, distance and recovery. Researchers are observing how polyphenols can cut the edge off these forces to improve workouts and speed recovery.

Add high polyphenols to the caffeine already in coffee itself and you have the ideal training fuel. A University of Birmingham study⁵ of cyclists concluded that athletes drinking coffee an hour before a workout increased performance times by a significant five percent and also had increased power, exerting 294 watts versus non-coffee drinkers who only exerted 277 watts. Expert trainers also suggest drinking coffee an hour before a morning workout to liberate free fatty acids and train the body to better use fat as a fuel. Coffee may also improve weight maintenance.⁶ So how do you get the most polyphenols?

1. Find beans with over 20,000 mg per kilogram of 3-CQA (caffeoylquinic acids);
2. Developing a light roast profile so that few chlorogenic acids (CGAs) are destroyed.⁷ These light roasts are also a tremendous taste delight. So much so, that they are called the new red wine for the hundreds of discreet flavors from hazelnut to strawberry jam and banana. Dark roasting can destroy up to 80 percent of CQAs, which are the main polyphenols in coffee; and
3. Brew for maximum extraction.

Dr. Danger to the Rescue

Phew! This may seem like a lot of work! For this reason I "authored" a coffee much like I'd write a book, embedding the coffee with all the expertise and knowledge it took to discover the perfect beans, pioneer a proprietary roast profile and determine the perfect brew for maximum effectiveness. I called it Dr. Danger Coffee (www.drdangercoffee.com) after my TV show and have invited consumer feedback. So far, it's been great, especially for athletes who notice a real difference in their performance. It also helps to remove many of the stigmas or doubts about the health benefits of coffee. Dr. Danger has additional benefits that go beyond health. After years of traveling to some of the most dangerous places on the planet, I discovered a way to help Americans find health and longevity through some of the world's finest coffee, in the convenience of their own homes, while rewarding farmers in developing nations for practicing sustainable farming. In addition, proceeds of profits from Dr. Danger Coffee go to orphanages in Kenya that care for some of the most destitute children in Africa.

Regardless which kind of coffee you choose to drink, start your own adventure and learn to discover the incredible taste profiles for one of the most biologically diverse plants on the planet. It is possible to feel younger, healthier and perform better with coffee! ■

Bob Arnot, MD, internal medicine, is an award-winning journalist and a *New York Times* best-selling author. He is the former chief medical correspondent for CBS News: "CBS Evening News," "48 Hours," "CBS This Morning;" NBC News: "Dateline NBC," "Today," "NBC Nightly News;" and chief foreign correspondent for MSNBC News. Arnot was also the host of the "Dr. Danger" reality TV series that took viewers on his thrill-seeking adventures during dangerous travels to Africa where he explored the wilds of Somalia, Kenya, South Africa, Botswana and Sudan. He is author of a dozen health and nutrition books, including *New York Times* best-sellers, "The Aztec Diet" (Harper Collins) and "The Breast Cancer Prevention Diet" (Little Brown). Arnot is a medical columnist for *Men's Journal* and *Vanity Fair*. He has served on many humanitarian aid boards including Save the Children, the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, Artists for Peace and Justice, U.S. Committee for Refugees and the Lindberg Foundation. After a long career of traveling to the most impoverished countries on the planet, Arnot launched Dr. Danger Coffee as a means to reward farmers in developing nations for practicing sustainable farming, while bringing Americans a selection of some of the world's finest coffees with the most health benefits into the convenience of their own homes. As a seasoned storyteller, Arnot is passionate about telling the stories of the people behind the Dr. Danger Coffee, while giving back proceeds of profits to orphanages in Kenya that care for some of the most destitute children in Africa.

Follow Dr. Bob Arnot on Twitter @DrBobArnot and www.facebook.com/drbobarnot.

(Endnotes)

1. <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1112010>
2. <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015-scientific-report/pdfs/scientific-report-of-the-2015-dietary-guidelines-advisory-committee.pdf>
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4. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25014672>
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