

Coffee in a Post-Collapse Society, by T.R. Wednesday, Apr 13, 2011

http://www.survivalblog.com/2011/04/coffee_in_a_post-collapse_soci.html

I have read many articles stating that if you have any addictions to nicotine, caffeine or alcohol that *now* is the time to change your habits so that your dependency on them in their absence are easier to tolerate. My coffee habit is less a habit-*at least that's what I tell myself*-and more of an enjoyment of life. That being said, in moderation coffee actually has an anti-oxidant property- *justification is always a sign of a habit I know* - not to mention the benefit of assisting in staying alert during a night watch task.

As a previous specialty coffee shop owner-prior to the commercialization of the industry by Starbucks -*no I am not bitter*- the storage of "freshly" roasted coffee has always been an issue. In fact, there is really only one method for long term storage of coffee since once the bean is roasted the oils and converted sugars begin to deteriorate and go rancid very quickly. Most off the shelf coffees that you buy in vacuum sealed containers or bags are actually made stale so that they can be vacuum sealed. Otherwise the bag would burst from the off gassing of the beans. Vacuum sealed freshness is a marketing term that actually means vacuum sealed staleness. I would always tell my customers you would never buy stale bread, why do you insist on paying a premium for stale coffee?

As I said there is a method for long term storage, unless you plan on rotating your roasted/ground coffee on a regular basis-eventually the coffee you have stored will become undrinkable. Or unless you live in the very narrow band of coffee producing countries that are 20 degrees on each side of the equator and 3,000 feet above sea level- coffee in a post-collapse society will disappear quickly. The answer is to purchase green coffee beans. These are the natural unroasted beans. There are many sites available on the internet where you can purchase anywhere from one pound to fifty pound bags. One advantage is that you will save 50% on your coffee budget paying anywhere from \$5-7 per pound by purchasing green coffee beans. The prices of coffee have been escalating just as other commodities and the anticipation of future inflation on coffee is expected to continue. If ordering by the internet and paying shipping costs are to be avoided then you could also check your local coffee roaster in the yellow pages and inquire, they may sell you coffee thus avoiding the shipping costs. Most however will make you pay a small fee above their costs to account for their lost profit, it never hurts to ask though.

Now that you have purchased a twenty five pound bag of beans it will arrive in a burlap bag, long term storage in a five gallon bucket and Mylar should follow your preferred method. You may want to store in multiple smaller Mylar bags for extended storage times. At this point the beans are not off gassing so vacuum sealing with oxygen absorbers is possible. Stored in this method your beans will stay fresh from 2-5 years until you decide to roast them. Some Columbian Estate coffees are actually aged prior to roasting and command premium prices.

The fear of roasting your green beans is not scary at all. In fact, I would expect readers of SurvivalBlog to see it as a challenge to learn how to and master it. It should not take any longer than fifteen minutes on the stovetop or in a Dutch oven over a fire if necessary to roast enough beans for a week. I roasted our coffee for the week this Sunday in a Panini Pan (a pan with ridges on the bottom to help distribute the beans and heat) but any pan will work. To roast coffee, start by placing a layer of beans on the bottom of the pan with medium-high heat. As the pan begins to roast your beans, continue to stir your beans slowly, your technique will develop over time, just don't leave the beans unattended, continue to stir or move the beans around or you wont get an even roast. You may need to decrease or increase the setting on your stove accordingly, but you will start to get the feel of the right setting after your second roast of beans. The oils in the bean will begin to heat up and caramelize, as they do you will hear them begin to crack open, this is the first of two pops you will hear during the roast.

The color will change from green to yellow to a light caramel and finally to a dark brown to black depending on how dark a roast you like. Also, the chaff from the beans outer coating will start to smoke, if you are inside on the stovetop, turn on the exhaust fan-trust me. About ten minutes into your roast and continual stirring you will have a mix of color ranging from light brown to dark brown and the second

crack will begin. The last five minutes the colors change over very quickly to dark brown to black and you will need to monitor the color. Unless you like an espresso roast where you have now burnt the sugars and oils you will need to stop the roasting process just prior to the desired roast or color. As the second crack subsides remove the pan from the heat store and continue to stir. There will be a lot of chaff, you do not want this in your beans so I put mine in a colander and toss them out side and either let the breeze remove the chaff or blow across the beans to remove as much chaff as possible. Let the beans cool before grinding. Once you grind your first truly freshly roasted coffee you will be amazed at the depth of flavors. In some coffees you will not have to add milk or sugar. Bitterness that is in brewed coffee comes from staleness not the true nature of brewed coffee. In a post-collapse society a hand operated coffee grinder will be necessary and can be found online as well.

As for brewing your coffee in the absence of an electric coffee brewer, the Cowboy coffee and French press coffee methods work great and both make a great cup of coffee.

Cowboy Coffee

Over a campfire

Fill coffee pot with cold water.

Add one rounded tablespoon of ground coffee for each two cups of water. (Add the coffee directly to the water.)

Bring the water just to a rolling boil. Take off heat.

Add a splash (a couple of tablespoons) of cold water. This is to settle the coffee grounds. Allow the coffee to set for a couple of minutes for the settling to take place.

French Press Coffee

Over a campfire

Heat water in a container

Place ground coffee in French Press, about 1tbs per cup

Pour hot (almost to a boil) over coffee

Put lid back on the press, leave in the up position

Steep for about four minutes

Slowly press down plunger after four minutes

Pour coffee to strain grounds v

Post-Collapse Coffee Equipment and Costs

I always appreciate sources for procurement so I will make mine that seem to be the most affordable. Some items-camp coffee pot, heavy bottomed pan, Dutch oven, and coffee press-you can locate at your local big box store. I would still recommend doing your research for the best product for the best price.

- Green Coffee beans \$5-7 per pound (Guatemalan \$143 for 25# plus shipping from Coffee Bean Corral)
- 5 gallon pails with Gamma Seal lids
- Oxygen absorbers (I always order from HoneyvilleGrain.com along with other items)
- Mylar bags, include smaller sizes for use as a barter item (your favorite supplier)
- Manual Coffee Grinder (such as a Kyocera Ceramic Coffee Grinder Model CM-50 CF \$49.99 #1678)
- Camp style coffee pot or French Press (Primula 6-Cup Coffee Press - Black Item # PCP2906 \$9.99)
- Heavy-bottomed pan or Dutch oven for roasting

My last thoughts concern bartering coffee. During the Civil War the Northern states had coffee for their soldiers in the field because of their ability to import from coffee producing countries. The South was not as fortunate and had to rely on Chicory as a substitute--a poor one at that. Southern troops however had an abundance of tobacco, which the Northern Troops lacked. And through barter each side would arrange for a truce to trade, in fact there are many stories of agreements being yelled across the lines-where soldiers much to their officers disapproval would make unapproved but look the other way

arrangements of tobacco for coffee. I can envision trading some scarce freshly roasted coffee for rice/beans or bullets. As a bartering item that contains one of those things that can be habit forming, in the grand scheme of things, coffee is less destructive than alcohol or tobacco.

Having coffee in your provisions could be a very valuable commodity from enjoyment, staying alert and to use as a barter item for other needed provisions.

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