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## THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT COFFEE

By Rebecca Coffey

**1.** Forget 5-Hour Energy. The original pick-me-up may have come from the nomadic Galla tribe of Ethiopia, which made energy bars from ground coffee beans and animal fat sometime in the first millennium.

**2.** Around A.D. 1000, Arab traders brought coffee beans home from Africa and started boiling them into a drink they called *qahwa*. Translation: "that which prevents sleep." **3.** Fast-forward to the 1930s, when German physician Max Gerson began promoting daily coffee enemas to detoxify the liver, stimulate metabolism, and cure cancers. **4.** More recently, Britain's Prince Charles has raved about coffee enemas, and Amazon.com sells DIY kits. **5.** But be warned: The National Cancer Institute says Gerson's claims are unsupported, and the American Cancer Society cautions that illness and death can result from contaminated coffee enema equipment, depleted electrolytes, and punctured intestinal walls. **6.** Have a cup instead. In 2011, the Harvard School of Public Health reported that in a 22-year study of nearly 48,000 men, those drinking six or more cups daily were about 60 percent less likely to die from prostate cancer. **7.** A 2008 study at Sweden's Lund University demonstrated that drinking coffee lowers the risk of breast cancer, at least for women who have a relatively common variant

of the gene CYP1A2, which helps to metabolize both estrogen and coffee. **8.** But what really grabbed the public's attention that year was cup size. The same Swedish team found a correlation between women with the genetic variation who drink three or more cups of coffee a day and smaller breasts. **9.** Volume may be the least of coffee drinkers' worries. In 2009, psychologists from the U.K.'s Durham University observed that students who drank three cups daily were three times more likely to hear voices and have out-of-body experiences. **10.** Bach voiced his love of coffee in a cantata. With libretto by Christian Friedrich Henrici, the *Kaffeekantate* was first performed in Leipzig, Germany, sometime between 1732 and 1735. **11.** "Father, don't be so severe! / If I can't drink / My bowl of coffee three times daily / Then in my torment I will shrivel up / Like a piece of roast goat," goes the soprano part. **12.** Americans, too, sing coffee's praise. According to Harvard research, Americans spend \$40 billion on coffee each year. **13.** The world consumes close to 1.6 billion cups of coffee every day. **14.** A global phenomenon, the grande (or medium) 16-ounce coffee at Starbucks contains the caffeine equivalent of 9.5 cans of Coke. **15.** It takes approximately 4,700 ounces, or 37 gallons, of water to make just one cup of coffee when you account for inputs needed to grow and process the beans. **16.** Researchers from London's Royal Botanic Gardens warn that highland forests in Ethiopia and South Sudan, where most wild coffee grows, are disappearing as mountaintops warm. By 2080, these moist ecosystems may be gone. It's cause for concern, but not the end of coffee. The domesticated plant varieties we rely on for our joe are generally secure. **17.** That is, until they are threatened by disease. Nearly 70 percent of the coffee we drink today comes from offshoots of wild Arabica, or *Coffea arabica*—the coffee species that stores most of the genetic information we need to re-engineer commercial cultivars. **18.** *Coffea charrieriana*, found in Cameroon, is the only known naturally decaffeinated coffee. **19.** Coffee cherries—the fruit that bears our beloved beans—are a favorite snack of elephants, and the beans, or seeds, can be harvested, already hulled, from their dung. Smooth and caramel-tasting, elephant-dung coffee has been known to sell for \$500 a pound. **20.** Think coffee makes your breath smell bad? In 2009 researchers at Tel Aviv University found that adding coffee to a dish of saliva inhibited the growth of a bacterium that causes halitosis. So go ahead, take a coffee break. **D**

A visitor at a resort in Thailand samples high-end elephant-dung coffee, made from beans that have traveled the length of a pachyderm's digestive system.



**Rebecca Coffey** is a regular contributor to DISCOVER. She also writes for *Psychology Today* and *Scientific American*, and takes her coffee with milk.