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**PUT A SHINE ON THE PARTY SEASON**



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT We 'heart' Café Grumpy's coffee, low-key signage and Chelsea venue; baristas rule at Gimme! Coffee; some of the products on offer at Gimme! Coffee

# daily grind

New York's coffee scene has long been the butt of Australian jokes, but things are definitely looking up on the espresso front

**W**hingeing about bad New York coffee has become a favourite sport of visiting Aussies scouring the urban jungle in search of a decent caffeine fix.

With a choice between muddy drip coffee or bitter, mass-produced brews, who could blame them?

Well, it's time to spill the beans – New York is no longer a coffee backwater; at least if you know where to look. The city is in the midst of a coffee revolution and is riding high on what's being called the Third Wave, following its drip coffee and Starbucks phases. Now, all it takes to find a world-class cup is knowing where the artisan coffee houses live.

The city's best espresso haunts are hotly debated by the coffee faithful, but one thing that's hard to dispute is that Brooklyn and Manhattan are neck and neck in the coffee stakes. They share a common pursuit of using top-of-the-line espresso machines, highly skilled baristas and quality beans – commonly using single origin, Fairtrade and intricate house blends. Baristas practise their coffee art as if each crema is the next Picasso, and there's a growing trend of organised cuppings – think wine tastings for coffee sniffers.

For one of the city's best brews, head to **Café Grumpy**, located on a leafy section of 20th Street in Manhattan's gay- and artist-friendly Chelsea district. It's easy to miss, due to no signage, save for a low-key, cast-iron disgruntled face hanging over the door. Three baristas typically work the espresso machine and not one, but two Clover machines, those ever-expensive contraptions that brew ultra-high-end filtered coffee. The house blend is a single origin from Guatemala, and there's a regular rotation of 'guest' blends. Despite the name, the staff aren't particularly grumpy, with the only attitude stemming from the various 'No Laptop' signs posted on the walls. Grumpy's also has two other locations in Brooklyn's Park Slope and Greenpoint.





CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT The tiny Abraço Espresso; its owners, Jamie McCormick and Elizabeth Quijada; Oslo Coffee; Ninth Street Espresso at East 10th St in Alphabet City

Australian-operated roaster **Kitten Coffee** has been among those leading the revolution, along with Chicago's Intelligentsia, Portland's Stumptown and North Carolina's Counter Culture. A couple of years ago its Melbourne-born founder, Rowan Puckfield, brought his espresso culture with him, opening up a barista school in Brooklyn and roasting beans soon after. "When I got here, there was almost nothing," says Puckfield, a one-time investment banker. "Now, coffee in this city is accelerating at an amazing pace."

Manhattan's best coffee shops are usually found downtown. Another top contender, **Ninth Street Espresso**, has locations in Alphabet City, the East Village and Chelsea Market, and is excellent for its short and long pours. The latte is particularly good, and spending the extra 25 cents on the organic milk is well worth the fuller, creamier taste. **Abraço Espresso** on East 7th Street is as boutique as you get, with a strong following and little room for more than just knocking back your macchiato before heading to East Village's boutiques.

Your options get far slimmer once you head north of 23rd Street, but **Joe The Art of Coffee** provides two rare oases in Grand Central Station and on the Upper West Side (there are five Joe's in total), each pouring a nicely balanced, textured espresso. Joe offers Barrington Gold Espresso Blend from Massachusetts "for now...", according to the barista.

## Across the East River, in Brooklyn, the passion for coffee is surely aided by this borough's thriving artisan food scene

Across the East River, in Brooklyn, the passion for coffee seems even more pronounced and is surely aided by this borough's thriving artisan food scene. While there are amazing coffee shops spread throughout Brooklyn, the greatest concentration is found in the creative hotbed of Williamsburg and neighbouring Greenpoint. A top spot is **Oslo Coffee**, which roasts its own beans and serves a house brew that's deeply flavoured with a touch of citrus. Take a seat at the square communal table, admire the centrepiece antique Royal typewriter and watch scraggly bearded hipsters in skinny pants cycle by on vintage bikes.

Also check out **Gimme! Coffee** on Lorimer Street, which, although a bit further away from the action, is a quality spot and has better baristas than those found in its more well-trodden Nolita location in Manhattan.

So will the complaints about New York coffee cease? Well, greasy diners still serve bottomless cups of murky water, and Midtown is awash in mediocre coffee chains. But change is afoot, and it doesn't take much effort these days to find your cappuccino cup half-full, not half-empty. **VE+T**



### NYC COFFEE FILE

**Abraço Espresso** 86 E 7th St (near 1st Ave), East Village, abraconyc.com.  
**Café Grumpy** 224 W 20th St, Chelsea, Manhattan; 383 7th Ave, Park Slope, Brooklyn; 193 Meserole Ave, Greenpoint, Brooklyn, cafegrumpy.com.  
**Gimme! Coffee** 228 Mott St, Nolita; Manhattan; 495 Lorimer St, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn, gimmecoffee.com.  
**Joe The Art of Coffee** 44 Grand Central Terminal, Midtown East; 405 W 23rd St,

Chelsea; 9 E 13th St, East Village; 141 Waverly Pl, Greenwich Village; 514 Columbus Ave, Upper West Side, joetheartofcoffee.com.  
**Kitten Coffee** +1 718 360 8543, kittencoffee.com.  
**Ninth Street Espresso** 75 9th Ave, Chelsea Market; 700 E 9th St, Alphabet City; 341 E 10th St, Alphabet City, ninthstreetespresso.com.  
**Oslo Coffee**, 133-B Roebling St (between 4th and 5th Sts), Williamsburg, Brooklyn, oslocoffee.com.