

FILL'ER UP

Paul and Alana Halvorsen



BY LEEANNE JONES

» THAT FIRST SIP OF COFFEE CAN BE TRULY LIFE-CHANGING. DISCOVER THE MULTITUDE OF WAYS JAVA CAN BE BREWED AND SERVED TO ACCOMMODATE EVERYONE'S PREFERENCES.

THE CAFÉ CONNOISSEUR
Paul Halvorsen, of Story Coffee Co., has created a beautiful tale designed to be shared with the entire community.

If Story Coffee Co. were a literal story, it would be entering a triumphant third act. Started in 2016 as a crowd-funded cart at the Livermore farmers market, it morphed into a temporary pop-up inside the Bankhead Theater and tech incubator The Switch. It was slated to open its first brick-and-mortar home at the end of March.

“People kept asking, ‘Do you have a shop? Where is your

shop?’” owner Paul Halvorsen says of the customers who followed Story faithfully through every location and iteration.

“Story Coffee was built from the ground up, inch by inch, day by day,” says Halvorsen’s wife, Alana, of the shop’s strong communal base. And it certainly is mighty. Fans enthusiastically supported the café’s local partnerships by sipping Story Coffee stout at Altamont Beer Works, for example, and licking Story cold brew soft-serve at Meadowlark Dairy.

It’s the perfect time for a new indie coffee shop in Livermore: The city is booming with housing construction and a revitalized

downtown. Halvorsen—who worked as a Peet’s barista in college, fell in love with the craft and community of coffee, and went on to stints at Remedy in Oakland and Verve in Santa Cruz—says some of his patrons work in Silicon Valley or San Francisco and crave more elevated, urban-style epicurean experiences near home. “The excitement for us is finding a balance between really good coffee and being the delight in people’s days,” he notes.

Halvorsen hopes to achieve that with a welcoming space and a menu that is fun, not fussy. The shop on Maple Street is small but

bright, with communal seating and a retail corner offering whole beans and drinkware. Story’s sweet and smooth flagship blend, Three Hills—roasted by San Francisco’s Saint Frank—is used in espresso drinks and as batch brew. Single-origin coffees feature seasonally on the bar and by the cup, and cold brew flows from a tap. The fan-favorite whiskey latte is a mainstay, as is oat milk. (Combined, the two make up a drink called the O.W.L.)

“We’re coffee people, but we’re also people people,” Halvorsen says. “Good coffee can be served in a lot of ways.” storycoffee.co.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

What’s the best way to brew coffee? It depends on your time and your taste. Here’s a breakdown of six popular methods.



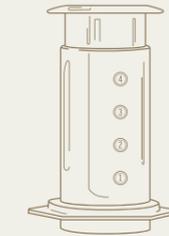
» **Chemex:** The hourglass-shaped flask is a popular choice for preparing the pour-over. Water is manually poured over ground coffee beans in intervals. Thick filters help yield a clear consistency and rich flavor. **Skill level:** Advanced. **Brew time:** 4 minutes.



» **Moka pot:** For this stovetop espresso maker, steam pressure drives water from a bottom chamber up through coffee grounds to a top chamber. It yields an intense, strong flavor. **Skill level:** Beginner. **Brew time:** 5 minutes.



» **Espresso machine:** Pressurized hot water is pushed through packed grounds and a filter. An espresso shot is the most condensed, richest-tasting coffee available. **Skill level:** Intermediate/advanced. **Brew time:** 2 minutes.



» **Aeropress:** Great for traveling or camping, this device uses hand pressure to force hot water through grounds and filter. It produces a full-bodied coffee with a higher caffeine content than some other methods. **Skill level:** Beginner. **Brew time:** 3 minutes.



» **French press:** Grounds are steeped in hot water, and then a filtered plunger separates the drinkable coffee from the muddy grounds. The result is a little oily, with intense aroma and flavor. **Skill level:** Intermediate. **Brew time:** 10 minutes.



» **Siphon:** In this theatrical process, vapor pressure propels heated water up into a top chamber filled with coffee grounds. Then, vacuum pressure pulls it back down through a filter into the lower chamber. This coffee tastes clean and robust. **Skill level:** Advanced. **Brew time:** 6 minutes.

Now Pouring

It can be hard to decide what kind of coffee to order—especially when drink names are derived from Italian, Spanish, and French words. Check out this helpful explainer.

Americano

Espresso diluted by topping it with hot water. **Variation:** A long black is prepared in reverse (the espresso is poured into a small amount of water). Because the Americano uses more water, the long black tastes stronger.

Cappuccino

One-third espresso, one-third steamed milk, and one-third foam. **Variation:** The flat white is equal parts espresso and steamed milk—but little foam.

Cold Brew

Coffee that is brewed with cool water over a 12- to 24-hour period. **Variation:** Nitro is cold-brew coffee infused with nitrogen gas, creating a stout-like effect.

Cortado

An espresso paired with flat steamed milk. **Variation:** A *breve* is made with creamier half-and-half.

Latte

Steamed milk poured into espresso. **Variation:** Add cocoa powder or chocolate syrup to make a mocha—or incorporate another ingredient such as pumpkin spice or whiskey for a fun flavor twist.

ILLUSTRATION: ROXANNE PASIBE

» DID YOU KNOW?

Decaffeination: Decaf coffee gets a bad rap for its flavor, but roasters employ these decaffeination techniques to combat the stigma:

Solvent method: After being soaked in water to extract caffeine (and, in turn, flavor), unroasted beans are processed with either methylene chloride or natural ethyl acetate—which draw out all the buzz—before returning to the flavor-rich water to regain some of their taste.

Water processing: In this chemical-free method, unroasted beans are soaked in water to release caffeine. The now flavor-saturated water is run through a carbon or charcoal filter to remove the rest of the caffeine before new beans are dunked in. Because the water already contains so much flavor, the new beans retain their taste while still losing their caffeine. —J.V.