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## Early start for Kush barista

by TRACY NEAL - Nelson    Last updated 10:31 06/04/2010

Tracy Neal starts a new, short series profiling the people who put the spring in many Nelsonians' step – the city's coffee roasters.

Andy Budd's future as a coffee roaster and barista was sealed the day he sampled his first brew at the age of seven.

The family were forced to hit the road out of South Africa for reasons he can't quite recall, other than it had something to do with his dad's involvement in a pirate radio station.

"My mother said if I could make her a decent coffee, then I could get to drink it."

About four decades later, the legacy of those words exists in the small Bridge St coffee house Kush, owned and run by Mr Budd.

The Kingdom of Kush in the east African country is where the first coffee was believed to have been sampled thousands of years ago.

The walls of Kush coffee house are decked with symbols of Ethiopia, which was where the family stopped for a while on the journey north from South Africa.

Mr Budd is one of five coffee roasters in Nelson city, and roasts on average 12 kilograms a day of 100 per cent Fairtrade coffee beans, which have the look and consistency of gravel from the bottom of a river before the heat works its magic and turns the coffee a rich dark brown.

It takes 20 minutes to roast the daily volume in the Has Garanti machine from Turkey, which would not look out of place in Willy Wonka's chocolate factory.

"I like it because it looks like an old steam train," Mr Budd says. Its special qualities transcend mere looks to include "absolute reliability" and consistency of roast.

Once it is heated to 240 degrees Celsius, the coffee beans are poured in. They are ready when the tell-tale popcorn noise starts. "You hear the first 'crack' and after the second, it's time to take the coffee out."

Mr Budd uses only beans from trees grown in the shade, as they would naturally be under the forest canopy.

Coffee "beans" are, more accurately, the seed of a fruit that grows on trees.

"When I started roasting, I did a lot of research into the type of roasting done in Europe."

Mr Budd categorises the different varieties he roasts by what they might be if they were music: the body and flavor of Kush coffee is described in terms of opera, soul, rock'n'roll, heavy metal or jazz.

"I always say that the skills need to roast good coffee are the same as those in a good barista. You have to concentrate, pay attention and do it with love.

"You can give two people the same beans and roaster and have two completely different results."

Mr Budd makes, on average, between 100 and 200 cups of coffee a day for his customers.

On his best day, he made 750 – but that was when he was giving it away.