

A double shot at the title

A newcomer to coffee has pulled off two stunning victories, writes **Scott Bolles**.

Just five months after opening on Clarence Street in the city, Velluto Nero stunned Sydney's caffeine set by nabbing the Champion Espresso and Gold Medal at the Sydney Royal Coffee Competition.

The first-up win by sisters Aileen, Gina and Vicky Young, the team behind Velluto Nero, was all the more extraordinary given the double.

A competition spokeswoman explained: "In the 10-year history of the competition, only a handful of gold medals have been awarded, let alone championship status."

Certainly Velluto Nero's espresso ticked the judges' boxes at the Sydney Royal Coffee Competition, where they take into account factors including aroma, body, freshness, acidity, aftertaste and balance. And let's not forget flavour.

The search for Sydney's best coffee is a subjective business and there is a raft of contenders.

It's difficult to ignore the consistency of **Bertoni's** in Balmain, where the attention to coffee-making is unwavering. The queues at **Campos Coffee** in Newtown give the first clue that its coffee is worth the wait, Sydney's best coffee houses are regularly found in out-of-the-way locations: **Toby's Estate** in the back streets of Woolloomooloo and the excellent **Allpress Espresso**, tucked away in Sydney's industrial inner east in Zetland. For the coffee-obsessed, Allpress is worth a considerable detour. And there are those coffee experiences that provide the romance of Sydney's coffee revolution. There's the history and street vibe of **Bar Coluzzi** in Darlinghurst, where judges and surgeons mingle with weary cycling teams. **Leichhardt's** uncompromising **Bar Italia** is another coffee pioneer.

The list of contenders seemingly gets longer each year. Even many experts admit coffee judging is a precise, at times fragile, science. One former coffee judge privately concedes he retired from judging a few years ago because he felt his palate wasn't fine-tuned enough to do it justice.

Great coffee is one thing but the search for a great cup of coffee also leans heavily on the barista who handles it and the machinery used.



Cafe oïé ... Aileen, Vicky and Gina Young of the Velluto Nero Coffee Couture shop in Clarence Street, Sydney.

Photo: Lee Besford

Sydneysiders bring their own subjective tastes to the party. Some of us prefer our coffee caramelly, some with milk, others without. And there is the soy milk decaffeinated coffee crowd.

Velluto Nero Coffee Couture is a cafe opposite **Becasse** restaurant on

Clarence Street in the city. Velluto Nero's elevation will make it a popular destination on the local coffee trail.

Whether it's the best coffee in Sydney will come down to the individual palates of an increasingly educated and fussy public.

One of the most pleasing aspects

of the rise of businesses such as Velluto Nero is the days when a bad coffee in Sydney was more likely than a good one are consigned to history. All that's left is for Sydneysiders to choose their favourite from an increasingly strong pool.