

Tre caffè per favore

There's always been a competition between Melbourne and Sydney but when it comes to coffee they both have outstanding places to go. We introduce you to three different businesses all offering an excellent service and coffee couture, as one of them puts it.

WORDS GLYNIS MACRI AND SANDRA PITRONACI

Silky black velvet

It was planned in New Zealand and executed in Sydney, a cunning plan by three Kiwi sisters to enrich the lives of the people of Sydney with the aroma and flavour of coffee. It took some time to organise but they've done it and consequently the people of Sydney are now able to buy freshly roasted coffee beans straight from the roaster in the heart of the city – that's if they're strong enough to bypass buying the odd cup or two to drink while they're there.

The Young sisters, Aileen, Vicky and Gina wanted to open a coffee-roasting business and saw an opportunity in Sydney. Sister Gina has lived and worked in Sydney for ten years and could see the market was ripe. Not only were people becoming coffee connoisseurs but there was nowhere people living in the city could buy ultra-fresh coffee straight from the roaster.

Aileen, who had spent many years in marketing for several world famous fragrance brands, wanted to get out of the corporate lifestyle and plan her own destiny, not someone else's, so she investigated the idea and thought a coffee shop and a roasting business could be a winner.

So Aileen and Vicky moved to Sydney and along with their sister Gina created Velluto Nero (Black Velvet) coffee couture. The shop is located in busy Clarence Street, populated by offices and shops and close to Sydney Town Hall. The décor is a calming shade of blue with white accessories including the ceramic coffee silos that make a startlingly bright display at the back of the shop.

They sell a range of coffee beans, all roasted on the premises, coming from exotic places like Brazil, Sumatra and Kenya. You can buy whole beans straight from the silos, or they will grind them for you. They are sold by weight but they do have pre-packaged stock if you prefer.

If you're after a popular style, try the delicious Signature blend which is also sold in 250-gram packs. The Signature blend makes a beautiful, creamy coffee with no bitter aftertaste.

Employing a coffee-roaster who was trained in the USA, the Young sisters learned how to roast the beans themselves. Advice on blends is now second nature, they've served and roasted so much, they really know what they are talking about.

Using only arabica beans, they offer at least eight different blends. Because the beans come from very different regions around the world, like

different types of wine, the characteristics of the terroir where they're grown shine through.

Also on the menu are scrumptious wraps, panini and cakes – many of them made by Aileen herself. Starting early in the morning, she bakes many trays of biscuits and slices each day. Her specialty is brownies that contain three types of chocolate and are delicious (spoken by someone who's tried one). The café has also become known for its Kiwi biscuits, the sisters' homage to their homeland.

The business has been set up so that anyone can buy the coffee from anywhere as the coffee shop and roasting business have been joined by a website that allows you to buy coffee online and have it shipped to you.

It's unusual seeing three women running a coffee-roaster but somehow these three ladies make it look easy. Next time you're in the Sydney city and looking for a good cup of coffee, walk down to Clarence Street and try Velluto Nero.

Velluto Nero

Shop 3, 259 Clarence Street, Sydney
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www.vellutonero.com.au

