

Coffee: Just Jitters, No Jolt?

As I sit trying to revive myself after a strenuous morning workout with the blackest tea that I could find in the house, I am a bit dismayed by today's de-caffeinated headlines. It seems that some researchers out of Bristol University in Britain have cast doubt on the energizing powers of caffeine.

Their studies suggest that while morning coffee may ease caffeine withdrawal symptoms, which may have built up overnight, it does not seem to increase alertness. That is, at least for regular caffeine junkies. Those who have avoided it for a while may still get a buzz. Yet, overall it seems those who drink a caffeinated beverage first thing in the morning may be no more alert than those who never consume one.

Of course, the British Coffee Association isn't going to take this one lying down. They quickly debated the study stating that there is a mountain of scientific evidence to back up the consumption of four to five cups per day as beneficial for alertness and performance. Unfortunately, they didn't cite a single piece of research.

As someone who quite frankly eliminates enough from their diet, I will briefly come to their rescue to justify the richly caffeinated tea I am sipping between sentences:

From a personal standpoint, whether it is a real boost, withdrawals, or simply placebo effect, the theory of energy is sometimes enough to get me through a tiring day.

From a scientific view, two Universities out of the very Starbucks-friendly United States have given us some other excuses to keep our daily brew. In January, a team of researchers from the University of Georgia reported that moderate doses of caffeine (say two cups of coffee) cut post-workout muscle pain by up to 48 percent. Okay, it was a (very) small sample of volunteers, but there is more.

About a year and a half ago, scientists out of the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania notified us that coffee is the top source of antioxidants in the U.S. diet. Though we should probably be getting a few more fruits and veggies as well, it is quite possible that the bean and tealeaves could contribute to a healthy immune system.

Keep in mind; there are always a few rules. Luckily, one of the latest isn't a problem for most of the people visiting this website. It seems that cow's milk may block some of black tea's potential superpowers in the prevention of heart disease, cancer, and strokes. I am not sure if this carries over to any possible benefits of coffee as well. To stay on the safe side, if you must make it creamy, a good milk alternative may be the best choice. There are oh so many to choose from, as you can see from this website.

Now that I am feeling a bit better about my in home energy experiment, I am off to boil some water for my second cup.