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Pour Coffee Co. continues to caffeinate Cleveland

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Jan 5, 2021



Pour Coffee Co. specializes in locally roasted coffees right out of its storefront in Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood.

Submitted photo

Pour Coffee Co., the brainchild of Charlie Eisenstat, owner of Pour Cleveland in downtown Cleveland, and Anthony Lazzaro, founder of the Lazzaro Law Firm in Moreland Hills, started locally roasting coffee beans in fall 2019 at 807 Literary Road in Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood.

The following year after Eisenstat gained control of Pour Cleveland in 2013, he met Lazzaro, who had offices downtown at the time. A shared passion for coffee and espresso roasting was discovered when Eisenstat gave Lazzaro regular pointers for at-home roasting. Not long after, the pair became friends and decided to go into a joint roasting venture – and Pour Coffee Co. was born.

“We wanted to bring something new to Cleveland, specifically a roasting style from the Nordic region and bring it here to see if we could emulate that,” said Lazzaro, who lives in Moreland Hills and is a member of Park Synagogue in Cleveland Heights and Pepper Pike. “It has been really fun. We take a white, extremely minimal bag other than our logo but it is what is inside that is different than what you get at a lot of domestic roasteries.”



Eisenstat, who lives in Lakewood, said, “I just got a strong desire to put our stamp on coffee roasting as well. It is new for Cleveland for sure, but I also find that what we’re doing is pretty different than what is out there in the U.S., too. We are roasting well-balanced coffees, putting a focus on acidity and brightness.”

But only after a few months of business, the pandemic hit Ohio in March 2020 – bringing everything to a screeching halt. This caused Pour Coffee Co. to question how they’d pivot so early on in the business, Lazzaro said. The first thought was to explore wholesale business, he added, looking at supplying to area coffee shops, bakeries, offices and businesses like the Vegan Donut Company and Goodkind Coffee, both in Lakewood, and Luna Bakery in Cleveland Heights and Moreland Hills.

“It was challenging,” Lazzaro said. “We offered other services and training at the roastery – looking at our venture as a training lab for customers to learn how to brew and try our equipment. But with COVID-19, it is very challenging to do that with masks on, having to constantly unmask and drink coffee with a group of people.”

Eisenstat's other venture, Pour Cleveland, has been temporarily closed on and off throughout the pandemic, which he said was worrisome due to it being Pour Coffee Co.'s biggest customer.

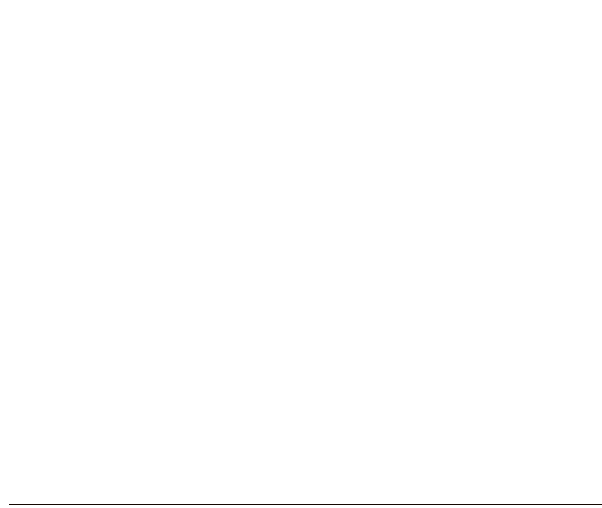
"I still sell our coffee through the website, but it was a big adjustment at first," he said. "But right now, Luna Bakery is one of our largest customers. So, we just started reaching out to a lot of shops both locally and out of town."

Lazzaro said, "The pandemic has been a challenge for a lot of coffee shops. A lot of our target audience has been closed, so we're very fortunate for the partnerships we have right now to get us through. But, I think once we get through the pandemic and maybe a year from now, we'll be in a very different spot and business will boom."

Both Lazzaro and Eisenstat said operating Pour Coffee Co. through a pandemic taught them many lessons.

"Listening to our customers and seeing how they innovate has been a big learning experience," Lazzaro said. "Going forward, it's about looking to our customers and seeing how they've innovated to continue to have retail operations, which has been uniquely challenging. So, we're looking to them to see how they've succeeded as we evaluate new opportunities."

Eisenstat added, "We've been in a unique spot because we just started roasting and putting out products at the end of 2019. We were so new at the start of this, and in some ways, that was probably to our advantage. We didn't have to scale down or deal with a huge drop off in sales. So, truthfully, we've been able to grow from nothing during the pandemic."



Becky Raspe