

True confessions of a coffee-addicted college student

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Guest Columnist

The friendlier, more-personal service of a small coffee shop like Brew Haha! can be its best attribute.

I'll be the first to admit I have an unhealthy addiction to all things caffeinated. Since high school, a significant portion of my hard-earned cash has gone directly to Brew Haha!, my coffee shop of choice. Funding my love for caramel coffee (no room) and non-fat lattes (hold the whip) has been no easy feat. Drinks of any kind add up, especially those with espresso. My friends and family caught on quick, and I soon began to receive gift certificates to Brew Haha! for my birthday and holidays.

My habit grew more expensive and time-consuming in college. I would casually suggest Brew Haha! as a meeting place for study groups of all kinds. "But I don't drink coffee," some would whine. "They

serve sandwiches!" I would snap back, defensively. I obviously had a problem.

In the winter of 2009, my caffeine addiction was validated in the best way imaginable. Yes, I was customer of the month. My parents asked if I received a gift certificate as an award. No, I explained, better. My name, interests, and drink of choice were chalked for eternity (OK, a month) on the board near the register in the Newark Brew Haha!. There were congratulations from friends. High-fives from fellow "Brew" groupies. Pictures were taken.

For those of you who don't know, Brew Haha! describes themselves on their website as a "locally-based espresso café chain" with eight locations. Newark is my obvious favorite, with Greenville as a close second. Their mission is "to save the masses from bad coffee experiences." I interpret this as, "We're not Starbucks." In recent years, Starbucks has tried to pretend they aren't a massive coffee chain by hiding behind a new policy: asking the customers their names. They scribble your name on your latte then call it out haphazardly to make the Starbucks "experience" seem more per-

sonal, less manufactured.

"Skim latte for Morgan!"

"It's Megan."

This new policy is flawed because it still lacks that personal connection, the two seconds it might take to acknowledge a regular at the register when they first walk in. Starbucks is on every corner, of every street, of every city, of... You get the idea.

My disdain for Starbucks got me to thinking. Maybe it isn't the coffee at Brew HaHa! I love so much. The staff makes a conscious effort to not only remember my name, but my order as well. They even welcomed me back from summer vacation. For certain, I could have a peppermint latte and a turkey sandwich almost anywhere. However, where else would that order read, "Jack Frost and one Meadowood." The menu is like speaking in code, a secret language only a true coffee lover could appreciate.

Over my time spent at the University of Delaware, much has changed. Ray Street dorms have turned into Main Street apartments. New friends have been made, majors have been switched. However, there

has been only one constant to my undergraduate career: daily workouts at the Little Bob gym. No, actually that is a huge lie.

Brew Haha! of course! Each morning, I know a friendly staff and a perfectly brewed espresso await me. They will remember my name. I can sit on a big couch with friends to discuss the day ahead. And above all, I can relax. To be sure, there will be a lot less "Brew" in my near future. This spring I will graduate and move to New York City, armed only with a Mass Communications degree and a very basic understanding of Spanish. I will undoubtedly find a small, locally owned coffee shop to incorporate into my daily routine, but I know it can never compare. Thank you, Brew HaHa!, for all the time we have spent together. So please, support your local coffee shop.

Megan Friedman is a guest columnist for The Review. Her viewpoints do not necessarily represent those of the Review staff. Please send comments to megfried@udel.edu.