

# CONSUMING NEWS

## Our Love Affair with Caffeine

By Cathi Volante, The Gadget Diva

More than 165 million Americans crave caffeine on a daily basis. We use it to ward off drowsiness and restore alertness in hopes of tapping into our inner fountain of youth on our way to the energy super-highway. It is the stimulant that gives many of us the hope of leading more productive lives and a trend that gets stronger by the day.

Studies provide that more than half of all Americans regularly use a caffeine-based product to help them stay awake. According to a report in the Canadian Military Journal, "An estimated two-thirds of American's qualify as 'sleep-deprived.'" Upon review of the use of caffeine in the military, the U.S. Committee on Military Nutrition Research (CMNR) concluded that, "Caffeine, in doses of 100 to 600 mg. can maintain cognitive performance in sleep-deprived individuals".

The use of caffeine in defense of tiredness may be driven in large part by America's epidemic of chronic tiredness: nearly 70 percent of Americans frequently fail to get enough sleep, with an alarming 20 percent reporting they doze off behind the wheel of a moving car. With stats like that, it's no wonder why our love affair with caffeine seems to have exploded in recent years.

### Measuring Our Caffeine

It is the quantity of caffeine an individual consumes that determines how much is too much; in sensible amounts, caffeine proves to be harmless. The American Medical Association (AMA) position on caffeine safety states, "Moderate tea or coffee drinkers probably need have no concern for their health relative to their caffeine consumption provided other lifestyle habits (diet, alcohol consumption) are moderate as well."

Research shows that moderate caffeine consumption is considered to be approximately 300 mg per day, equivalent to three cups of regular coffee. And long-term effects of a toxic nature do not appear evident when regular caffeine use is below approximately 650 mg a day. Above this level, users may suf-

fer from chronic insomnia, persistent anxiety, depression, and stomach ulcers.

As with anything ingested, reactions to alcohol, sugars, spices, caffeine and herbal ingredients vary from person to person. Consumers who are prone to having reactions, and/or medical or health conditions, should always consult their physician for recommendations on appropriate levels of consumption.

### The Products in Our Caffeine

Perhaps nowhere has there been a bigger explosion of caffeinated products than in the energy drink category, now outperforming the growth of bottled waters.

Pioneering companies like the infamous Red Bull, are finding themselves amidst a current market of more than a 150 varied brands in kind. Just one can of Red Bull delivers the same amount of caffeine in a cup of coffee, roughly 100 mg.

Coca-Cola has even kicked up their classic formula a notch by infusing coffee

extracts, launching

Coke BlaK this year which delivers 47 mg of caffeine per 8 oz. serving, and Tab Energy, marketed in a carbonated pink drink form to women, which packs in 72 mg of caffeine per 8 oz. (Regular Coca-Cola Classic has 23 mg of caffeine and Diet Coke has 31 in each 8 oz. serving.)

New products are being developed all the time in an attempt to lure coffee swigging consumers away from their morning mug of java. Caffeine enhanced food products, such as candies and energy bars are popping up all over. Even Ben & Jerry's have gotten into the act by packing a caffeinated wallop of 170 mg per serving into their no-fat Coffee Fudge Frozen Yogurt.

One of the latest products to join the caffeine brigade is a caffeine-containing gum, commercially formulated to offer an alternative caffeinated delivery system. In research conducted by the US Army's, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), Jolt Caffeinated Gum was found to be absorbed more rapidly than caffeine in a pill form, delivering the equivalent of one cup of coffee in just two small pieces. Portability and convenience are also a big



plus of caffeinated gum, making it one of the most attractive "pick-me-up" alternatives around.

According to Dr. Michael Rosekind, board member of the National Sleep Foundation and former NASA researcher, "Jolt Gum may be even more effective than teas, coffees or energy drinks in helping people stay awake. Chewing gum is a great delivery system because it allows the ingredients to enter the body faster - through sublingual (under the tongue) absorption."

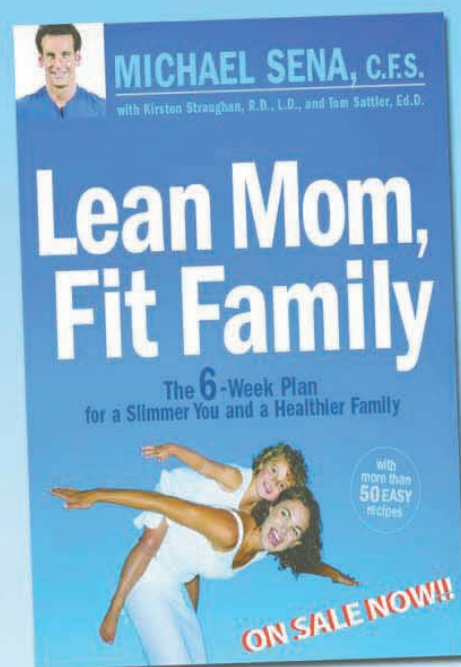
### The End of Our Caffeine Story

If variety is the spice of life, then the array of caffeinated products on the market today fits quite nicely in the general scheme of things. We can have our fix by way of food, drink, pills and now, by chew - what will they think of next?

From students pulling an "all-nighter", to moms on the run, our relationship with caffeine can definitely be one of rejuvenating reliance. But, have we truly become dependent upon it or did our love affair naturally evolve from the cultural impact that Starbucks and others created in providing "living room like" atmospheres for our caffeine consuming pleasure? Check your emails, and the amount of caffeine you're having the next time you plopp yourself down on one of those cushy couches.

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## Country Style Barbecued Onions

Created by Steven Raichlen, host of BBQ University on PBS, and author of Barbecue Bible, How to Grill, and the new, Raichlen on Ribs

Prep Time: 10 min. Cooking Time: 40 to 60 min.

- 2 Cups wood chips (preferably hickory)
- Medium Vidalia onions or other sweet onions
- Can (28 ounces) of BUSH'S Country Style Baked Beans
- 1/4 Cup dark brown sugar
- 1/2 Cup sweet red barbecue sauce
- Tbsp (1/2 stick) butter, cut into 8 pieces, room temperature
- Strips bacon, precooked, cut into 2 inch pieces (8 pieces in all)
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Soak hickory chips in covered pot filled with water for 15-30 minutes. Drain and set hickory chips aside.

Set up grill for indirect grilling and preheat to medium heat (350°F).

Cut off onion stems and peel. Hollow out onions leaving base intact. Finely chop pieces removed from onions. In mixing bowl, combine Bush's Country Style Baked Beans, onions, brown sugar and barbecue sauce. Spoon baked beans mixture into onions. Top each onion with 1/2 tablespoon butter, ground pepper and piece of bacon.

Arrange onions on grill grate away from fire. If using a charcoal grill, toss wood chips on coals. If using a gas grill, place wood chips in smoke box. Grill onions 40 to 60 minutes or until they are golden brown and tender. Serves: 8



BAKED BEANS