

BEST coffee shop (non-chain)



Quartermaine owners Roger Scheumann and Carolyn Weinberg

HUGUETTE ROE

Quartermaine Coffee Roasters

Roger Scheumann's passion for coffee was born at an early age. His stepfather, Jerry Baldwin, co-founded Starbucks, and young Roger was present for all the company's early high points, from the time current Chairman Howard Schultz was hired to the day Starbucks went public under Schultz's leadership.

Scheumann got his hands-on training in Starbucks' wholesale and retail management program, where he realized that he most enjoyed working in the coffee stores. "I really loved interacting with the customers over the bean counter in Seattle, and I still love it today," he says.

Scheumann, 43, is president and co-owner of Quartermaine Coffee Roasters (4817 Bethes-

da Avenue, 301-718-2853, www.quartermaine.com). His partner, Carolyn Weinberg, 41, is CEO and has also been a coffee lover since childhood. "My mother is French, and I remember drinking café au lait from a bowl when I was little," she says.

They both knew what they wanted to create at Quartermaine; they call it a true coffee shop, a place with great service and customers who enjoy each other's company as much as their locally roasted coffee.

"When I walk in, they say, 'Good morning, Stacey,'" says Stacey Fitzsimmons of Chevy Chase, who visits the coffee shop daily for her cup of "Aged Sumatra" before going to work as

an epidemiologist at the National Institutes of Health. "Quartermaine is an old-fashioned meeting place, a community."

Quartermaine was the third coffee company launched by Baldwin. He sold Starbucks to Schultz and other investors in 1987, and he also owned Peet's Coffee & Tea, a well-known brand on the West Coast. In 1991, Baldwin and his former partners created Quartermaine (branded by the same guru who named Starbucks, New Balance footwear and Redhook Ale), and they asked Scheumann to be their first employee.

"They embarked on a worldwide search for the best location and picked the D.C. area because of the demographics—high income and

education level," Scheumann recalls. After traveling the world's coffee regions to learn more about roasting green coffee beans, Scheumann set up a temporary office in Friendship Heights. "Then I ran a ... classified ad in the *The Washington Post* for a wholesale sales manager and Carolyn answered it," he explains.

Weinberg, a former handbag sales manager in New York City who had studied retailing, marketing and business management at Syracuse University, says the start-up aspect appealed to her creative side, and she wanted to move home to Potomac.

Weinberg's first task was to oversee the building of the Quartermaine Coffee Roasters plant in Rockville—"hard hat and all," she says. After the construction, Weinberg ran the plant and the company's wholesale division while Scheumann opened several Quartermaine coffee shops in the Washington area, including the Bethesda store.

When Peet's made an offering to go public, Quartermaine was put up for sale—and Scheumann bought it in 1995. "Fast forward to 2003," he says. "Carolyn bought half the business and we've been 50/50 partners ever since."

Weinberg says that she and Scheumann are "like brother and sister, and our spouses value the relationship as much as we do." Her four children and Scheumann's two are learning the coffee business as they grow up—mostly by visiting, since the oldest is just 11. "We're a little old school," he explains. "Our day-to-day business is inclusive of our families. We don't just go off to work; we talk about what happens in an age-appropriate way, and the kids visit the plant and the shop."

Scheumann and Weinberg closed the other Quartermaine stores and now concentrate their energies on the thriving Bethesda store and their wholesale business.

Customers have a special affinity for the store. Margie Wilson of Bethesda says: "I just say 'Hi,' and they make my favorite coffee and put it on

my account. It's the best coffee in the world, plus great camaraderie and long-term relationships. I've recruited all my friends, and even my mother."

"I love this shop because it's a family-owned enterprise, and they are very generous," says Dennis Cotter of Bethesda, a medical researcher. "They helped my daughter's school send coffee to soldiers in Iraq." Dennis likes a mixed-blend coffee, "half and half with a little vanilla. I don't have to ask. They know."

Not all of the regulars are local. Music agent Arash Shirazi, a Rockville native who now resides in Arlington, Va., loves Quartermaine coffee so much he braves commuter traffic for a cup. "I arrange my conference calls for the car on my way over, or I send one of my staff," says Shirazi, whose BMW is often spotted double-parked in front of the coffee shop. "They have the best coffee in the city. The owners are extremely involved in quality control."

Quartermaine annually roasts more than 500,000 pounds of green coffee beans at its Rockville plant. The Arabica specialty coffees are delivered to customers "within 24 hours after roasting. We think that's the best taste. We call it roasting with a point of view," Weinberg says. The company's Bethesda-area wholesale customers include Clyde's Restaurant Group, Chef Geoff's, Mia's Pizza and Persimmon, as well as My Organic Market and Whole Foods. The coffees and 27 imported teas also are sold online and by mail order.

"Roger's bloodline in the coffee industry is great, but Quartermaine is successful today because we have a great staff and a great product," Weinberg adds.

"We make coffee that we think tastes good, and there are a lot of people who agree with us. It's as simple as that," Scheumann says.

OTHER TOP VOTE GETTERS:
The Bean Bag • Tastee Diner