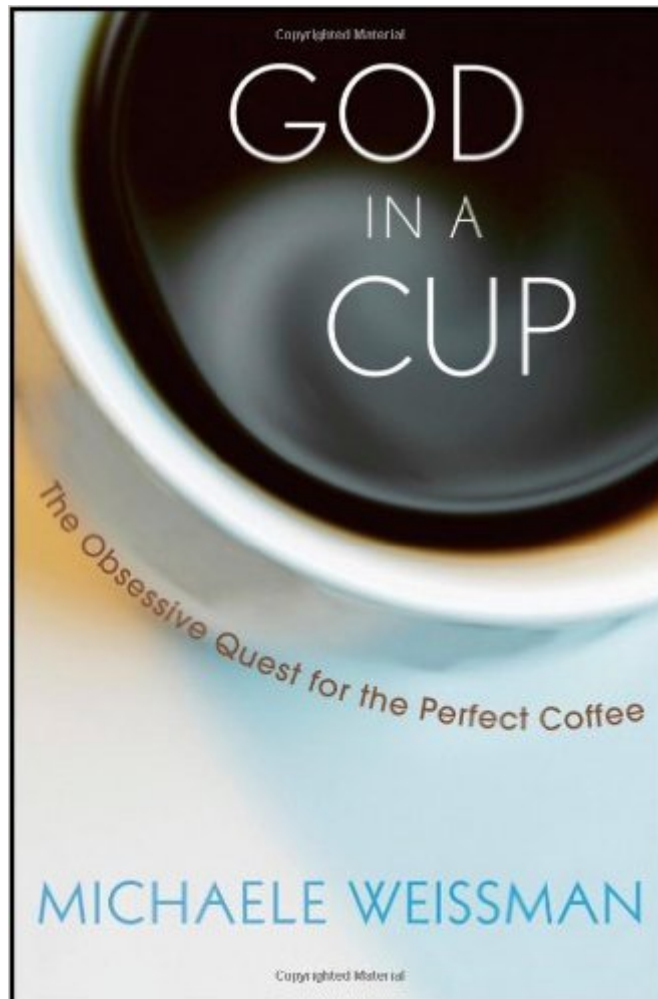


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# God In A Cup: The Obsessive Quest For The Perfect Coffee



## Synopsis

Can a cup of coffee reveal the face of God? Can it become the holy grail of modern-day knights errant who brave hardship and peril in a relentless quest for perfection? Can it change the world? These questions are not rhetorical. When highly prized coffee beans sell at auction for \$50, \$100, or \$150 a pound wholesale (and potentially twice that at retail), anything can happen. In *God in a Cup*, journalist and late-blooming adventurer Michaela Weissman treks into an exotic and paradoxical realm of specialty coffee where the successful traveler must be part passionate coffee connoisseur, part ambitious entrepreneur, part activist, and part Indiana Jones. Her guides on the journey are the nation's most heralded coffee business hotshots—Counter Culture's Peter Giuliano, Intelligentsia's Geoff Watts, and Stumptown's Duane Sorenson. With their obsessive standards and fiercely competitive baristas, these roasters are creating a new culture of coffee connoisseurship in America—a culture in which \$10 lattes are both a purist's pleasure and a way to improve the lives of third-world farmers. If you love a good cup of coffee—or a great adventure story—you'll love this unprecedented look up close at the people and passions behind today's best beans.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There are two reasons to read *God in a Cup*, food journalist Michaela Weissman's true life account of the colorful young guys who are making gourmet coffee one of the sexiest culinary products you can buy. First Weissman is a terrific writer. Her book is funny and fast paced. She rolls out the story of her travels in coffee producing nations and here in the United States as if she were writing a novel. Read her description (with full sound effects) of a coffee cupping at the Cup of Excellence

competition in Nicaragua, see how she brings to life a confrontation between eager coffee buyers and impoverished coffee farmers in Yirgacheffe, Ethiopia, and experience her rendition of dueling baristas as a barista competition, you'll begin to understand what all the fuss about specialty coffee is about. And that brings me to the second reason to read this book. *God in a Cup* provides a great journalistic thumbnail of the global marketplace. Weissman dramatizes issues like sustainability, profitability (as in who earns the profits from agricultural products) and Fair Trade, without ever getting bogged down in the tiresome politics. Beginning at the farm and ending in a swish café where coffee is brewed in an \$11,000 gizmo called a Clover, Weissman sheds light on some of the most complicated economic issues of our day, while never ceasing to be amusing. She does this by writing a story about the global marketplace that is first and foremost a story about real people whose eccentricities, foibles, weaknesses and strengths she brings alive.

Most coffee lovers are satisfied to surf the web to learn about coffee. Michele Weissman actually got out and traveled to some off the beaten track places to learn about coffee from the source, the people who actually grow the stuff, as well as the people who process it and sell it in upscale coffee bars. The book is well written and paced, though the proof readers seemed to have missed a few inconsistencies of spelling and first/last name order. Still, it offers a fascinating view, written by an experienced journalist, into a world of people obsessed with the search for the perfect cup of joe. It is certainly enriching my foray into learning more about specialty coffee.

Honestly- I just read a 250 page book about a beverage that I don't drink in, oh, about 72 hours. I literally couldn't put it down. Congratulations, Ms. Weissman, you have truly created a captivating narrative about a subculture I could never be a part of and made it this breathtaking world of whirlwind travel, chutzpah, occasional danger, nose-to-the-grindstone work ethic and caring, while preserving the genuine realities of the farmers, a tightrope I would have agonized over had I been you. "Business to me is about bringing people out of poverty", a quote from the book and summary of what this book is about to me: More than just coffee. The care and lengths that people like Duane and Geoff go to to insure fair prices, good quality, and abstracts such as health care, non-lecherous pre-financing, and willingness to either challenge the co-ops or empower the farmers to make up their own minds, while not entirely altruistic, is incredible. There were many laughs in there ("I hate those guys, coffee Nazis!"), and I'd like to retire to Panama...tomorrow. It is a stunning book that I have already recommended to many, with many more to come.

Weissman clearly traveled a lot to write this book, because she never stops reminding the reader of it. I wish the book had focused more on coffee instead. Page after page will focus on the drama of a coffee tasting, but I would be left with little sense of understanding of coffee flavors and other aspects of what distinguished one coffee from another. Many times, I felt like I was reading a string of magazine profiles of coffee tasters and buyers. There are some interesting coffee insights and the book is worth reading for those. However, I longed for more about coffee and less about those who buy it and sell it and where the author stayed when she was interviewing them.

I was so drawn into the mystery of the Gesha coffee tree presented in this book that I read most of it in one sitting. What is it about coffee from this tree that commands such an absurdly high price? The intriguing thing about it is that we never get a definitive answer to the question of where it came from, but instead are taken on an extensive journey behind the scenes of the third wave coffee movement and get a peek at the companies, personalities, and machinations that drive the modern specialty coffee industry. In other words, while the origin of the tree is still a mystery at the end of the book, we get a very complete picture of who the companies/people are that are willing to pay such exorbitant prices. *God in a Cup* is an important addition to the existing literature on coffee and one that I will whole-heartedly recommend to anyone with questions about how the industry works in practical terms.

Michaele Weissman's *God in a Cup* is perhaps the best book on the market that explains what is happening in the specialty coffee industry to date and how it has revolutionized the entire coffee business. A relatively small group of "coffee guys" direct source beans from all over the world in an attempt to find and buy only the best of the best coffee and bring it to the consumer. In doing so, they help coffee farmers improve their methods of coffee farming and pay them better prices too. All in all it's a win-win situation. Best read for learning about all aspects of coffee.

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