

# Decaffeination Station: Support for coffee without the kick

Julie Lancaster

Many coffee connoisseurs know where to find their favorite cup of joe. But a select few can pinpoint the perfect cup of decaf. Some of our more hyped-up brothers and sisters surmise that unleaded coffee is for the faint-hearted and question the point of drinking the buzz-less concoction. Of the decaf drinkers, previous owner Ryan of Single Speed Coffee Roasters concludes "I just don't understand them yet."

Times are changing. Decaffeinated coffee drinkers are becoming an increasingly visible caffeine conscious collective who enjoy a steaming cup just as much as the next guy.

**Why** After interviewing seven Flagstaff coffeehouses, we uncovered 12% of their clientele drink decaf.

Sarah Jaquith, local barista, has spoken with decaf-converts. "There are people who used to be caffeine addicts and the effects could only be felt with way too much coffee. So they said 'enough already' and quit being a slave to the high." For many, the switch to the gentler sibling leaves them never looking back.

Seasoned Flagstaff baristas Troy Thurman and George Broxton have spent many hours listening while they brew. They've learned that this significant minority has four main reasons for their caffeine-free choice. They don't want the jitters, don't want to be awake all night, are pregnant, or think caffeine has a negative effect on their body.

As caffeine inhibits the absorption of calcium, increases the production of stomach acid and has diuretic among other effects on the body, a raised awareness of our caffeine consumption seems prudent.

**How** 97% or more of caffeine must be removed to be deemed decaffeinated coffee. The extracted caffeine can be used in medicines and sodas. Red Bull and Excedrin may be thanking you every time you choose decaf.

Waiting in line to purchase your next cup, you may wonder how caffeine is extracted from a plant in which it naturally exists.

**The answer:** by chemicals or water. There are four ways to decaffeinate: methylene chloride processing, ethyl acetate processing, carbon dioxide processing, and water processing (Swiss Water or sparkling water). Even though methylene chloride and ethyl acetate both have low boiling points and supposedly "vaporize off," many are wary.

Typically, if your coffee is said to use activated carbon filters in the process, then water was the decaffeinator, and you can rest assured that nothing extra is lingering in your café. It is common today to see Swiss Water (or SW) written prominently on bags of chemical-free coffee.

All have a decaffeinated espresso, so you can also enjoy decadent lattes and the like. Many sell several varieties of bagged decaf in their shops and on their websites (there are thirty decaf choices on The Coffee Beanery website!).

**Drink out loud** If decaf is your drink of choice, even if only on occasion, no need to hide in the shadows. Applaud yourself for attempting to muster up your own verve. Celebrate your choices; consider hosting an in-home blind taste test of your favorite brews getting others on the decaf bandwagon.

Delve deeper and ask more questions. Would your favorite coffee shop consider stocking 100% naturally caffeine-free coffee substitutes such as Teeccino or Cafix? Are any of the current decaffeinated roasts organic, fair-trade or shade grown?

As customers, your voice and choices impact. May you relish in your conscious consuming with even non-stimulating, soothing sip.

## Rate your coffee shop

We researched our local establishments to find out what you want to know.

How many decaf brews are available at one time?

Are the beans fresh and locally roasted? What type of decaffeination process is used?



### It's About Coffee

One or two rotated offerings per day.  
Roast their own beans: Flagstaff, AZ.  
Swiss Water decaffeination.

### Late for the Train

One offering per day by ordering a Decaf Americano (using decaffeinated espresso beans).  
Roast their own beans: Flagstaff, AZ.  
Swiss Water decaffeination.

### Campus Coffee Bean

One rotated offering per day.  
Bella Luna coffee: Phoenix, AZ.  
Swiss Water decaffeination.

### The Coffee Beanery

Only choice: House Blend Decaf.  
Roast their own beans: Flushing, MI (international chain).  
Swiss water decaffeination.

### White Dove

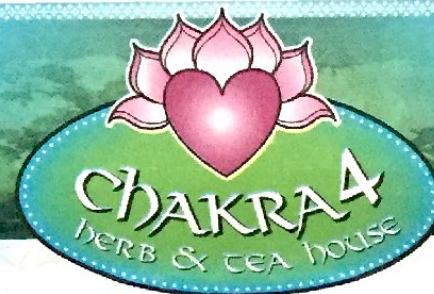
One offering per day by ordering a Decaf Americano.  
Single Speed Coffee Roasters: Williams, AZ.  
Swiss Water decaffeination (recently switched from methylene chloride).

### Macy's

Only choice: Decafe Sumatra.  
Roast their own beans: Flagstaff, AZ.  
Methylene chloride decaffeination.

### Starbucks

Only choice: Decaf Pike Place.  
Roast their own beans: Carson City, NV (international chain).  
Methylene chloride decaffeination.



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