

Taster's Choice

Local coffee houses attract regulars with diverse flavors, atmospheres

By Marianne Hudson
THE BATTALION

Katie Gardner stands in line waiting to receive her caffeine dosage of the day. A man in front of her picks up a copy of The New York Times from the distribution bin and briefly skims the front page. In a short time, Gardner is at the front of the line placing her order with a green apron-clad Starbucks employee. She is asked to move around to the pick-up counter to receive her daily coffee.

For Gardner, a sophomore communications major, the recently-opened Starbucks on Texas Avenue was her first coffee shop experience.

"I've always heard about Starbucks from friends," she said, reaching for her coffee in a to-go paper cup. "I've never been to a coffee shop before, but when I think of good coffee, I think of Starbucks."

Within minutes of her arrival, Gardner returns to her car, coffee in hand.

Other customers, such as Katie Burrough, stay to drink their purchases. Burrough, a senior marketing major, snagged one of the few tables and is writing Christmas thank-you cards to family and friends.

Starbucks is not a new experience for Burrough, who has been frequenting the international chain since she was old enough to drive.

"I'm a loyal Starbucks customer," she said, sipping on a steamy roasted blend. "I would have never expected to finally see one in a place like College Station."

While some students and area residents have long awaited the opening of a stand-alone Starbucks, others remain skeptical of the impact it might have on local coffee shops.

Eric Dickens, a 2001 graduate, was a regular at Coffee Station during his time at Texas A&M. Visiting College Station for the day, he stops at Coffee Station to grade papers for his middle school class.

"When I'm in town, I like to visit the places I miss the most," he said. "(Coffee Station) is one of

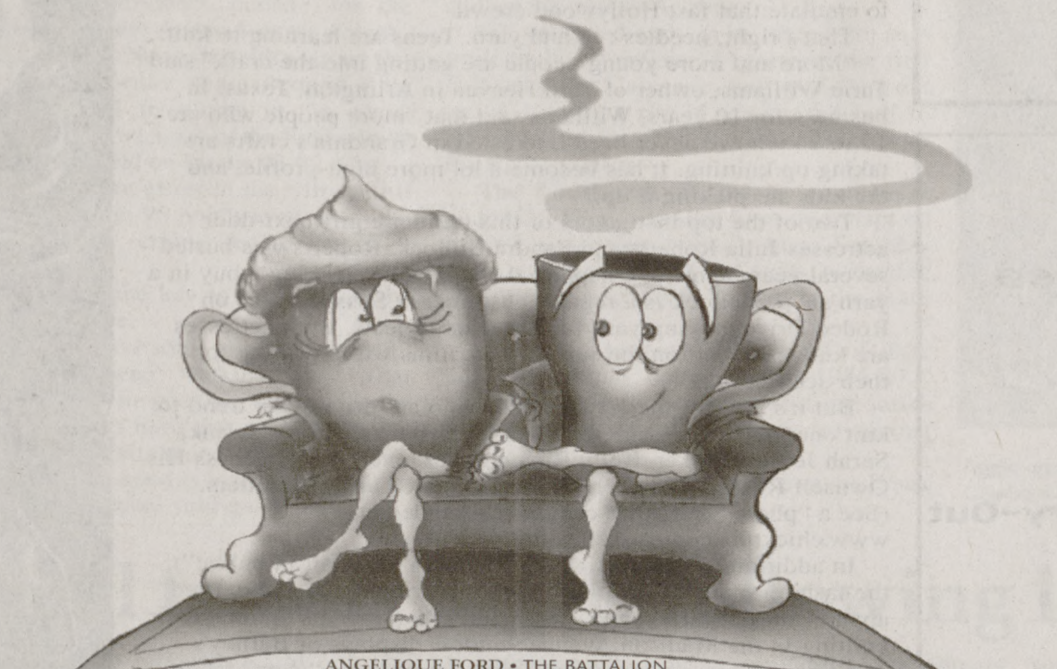
those places. I'm afraid that places like Starbucks will hurt these little coffee shops. You can find Starbucks anywhere, but places like this are unique."

Dickens said he prefers local coffee shops because they offer a more personal atmosphere than Starbucks.

"At Starbucks, it's kind of a come in, get your frap and leave situation," he said. "But here and at Sweet Eugene's, you come in, say 'hey' to everyone and chill for a while. You become more than just a customer to the people who work here."

Vlad Vladimirov, a Coffee Station manager, said he tries to get to know everyone who comes through the door.

"We try to care and get to know our customers' tastes, know their name, know all about them," he said.



ANGELIQUE FORD • THE BATTALION

Wearing a red Diamondbacks shirt and roughed-up jeans, Vladimirov bounces around the shop, greeting customers along the way.

A customer who carries a brown paper bag approaches him.

"This is Alper and he's an international student from Turkey," Vladimirov said. "Today, he's going to show me how to make Turkish coffee."

Vladimirov, who is from Russia, said several international students hang out at Coffee Station. He said he wants them to feel at home, and is experimenting with their native coffees.

All of the coffees served at Coffee Station were created on location, with the exception of general coffees such as the Snickers Latte, Vladimirov said.

"I let my employees run wild and create concoctions that blow people away," he said.

A few blocks down the road, Sweet Eugene's also serves its own coffee variety as well as its own unique environment. A large graffiti refrigerator stands by the front door covered with customer quotes such as "Ever notice that dogs' feet smell like Fritos," and "This mullet was here 11/15/02." Behind the counter, a deer head is mounted on the wall, equipped with coffee mugs hanging from its antlers.

Owners Matthew and Aaron Brown, brothers and College Station natives, said they were inspired to found College Station's original coffee shop in 1993 after traveling the West Coast.

Matthew Brown said starting up a local shop required long hours and hard work.

"We both worked 120 hours a week each without a day off for the first 18 months because we didn't have enough money to hire a staff," he said. "We knew the town would support it, but we didn't know if we had enough money."

After a few years, Brown said, they were able to expand. Two additions have been made since 1993, he said.

"We are now big enough so people can stay and hang around," he said. "We want people to come and go and not feel rushed out of their table."

Lori Doucet, a junior international studies major, brought her dad and a family friend to Sweet Eugene's after buying her class books. All three sit around a wicker table, drinking from oversized black coffee mugs.

"I would think students would come here because it is more of a place to gather," said Kurt Doucet, Lori's father.

Burrough, however, is not one of those students. She said she goes to Starbucks because it is not as much of a gathering place.

"I like the size of Starbucks because it keeps it from becoming a big meeting place for organizations like Fish Camp," she said.

Burrough also prefers the anonymity Starbucks offers her as a customer.

"I don't know any of the people working here, but I really don't like that type of environment anyways," she said. "I just want my coffee and want it to be good."

Campus With a Dream Week

January 18 - 25, 2003



"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Schedule of Events

Saturday, January 18

6:00 p.m. **Martin Luther King Program**
Lincoln Center

Monday, January 20

10:00 a.m. **Freedom March**
Sadie Thomas Park to
Kemp Elementary

A Day On Instead of a Day Off!
Various service projects
throughout the day

Tuesday, January 21

12:00 p.m. **Kick-Off Celebration**
Karen Chavez Band
Rudder Plaza

7:30 p.m. **Kweisi Mfume**
President/CEO of NAACP
Rudder Theater

Wednesday, January 22

7:00 p.m. **Coming to America**
MSC 223J

8:00 p.m. **Book Discussion:**
Huckleberry Finn
Rumor's Cafe

Thursday, January 23

8:00 p.m. **Movie: Get On the Bus**

Friday, January 24

7:30 p.m. **South Pacific**
Rudder Auditorium

9:00 p.m. **Aggie Nights**
Showing *Higher Learning*
and *American History X*

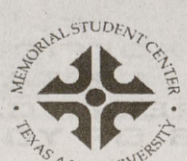
Saturday, January 25

12:00 p.m. **MLK Service Conference**
Free tickets at MSC Box
Office

7:30 p.m. **South Pacific**
Rudder Auditorium

All Week
Dmitri Koustov
Visual Arts Gallery

12:00 p.m. **Lunchbox Concerts**
Rudder Plaza
Tuesday, Wednesday, and
Thursday



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La Bodega

Baja Taco Bar

DRINK SPECIALS

- **Sunday:** \$6.50 - 30oz. Mexican Martini Shakers
\$10 Buckets of Beer
- **Monday:** \$6.50 - 30oz. Mexican Martini Shakers
\$10 Buckets of Beer
- **Tuesday:** \$2 Frozen Margaritas
\$2 Import Beers
- **Wednesday:** \$7.50 Watermelon Mexican Martini Shaker
\$1.50 Watermelon Singles
- **Thursday:** \$1 Tecate cans & \$6.50 Mexican Martini Shakers
\$2 Tecate cans everyday, all day

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