

Business Spotlight

By Andrea Wightman

SPARKPLUG COFFEE DELIVERS QUALITY COFFEE STRAIGHT TO YOUR KITCHEN



KARA ISERT

photo courtesy: Michele Cummings

Why leave the house, especially in the winter, when you can have quality coffee in your kitchen? Sparkplug Coffee is answering that question by filling a gap in the Toronto coffee industry. Though we in Corktown are blessed with comfortable and tasty coffee shops, it's still tough to enjoy a good cup of java at home.

Sparkplug Coffee is a Corktown coffee service that sources beans from all over the coffee world and delivers them to you. "It's just awesome to get a new coffee in my mailbox every couple of weeks. The coffee is really good and Sparkplug's webpage is full of great tips on how to maximize that quality," says Arthur Sinclair, a regular Sparkplug customer and Corktown resident.

Kara Isert is the owner of Sparkplug Coffee, and the driving force behind Corktown's access to top quality beans at home. Growing up in Vancouver (a coffee city if ever there was one), Kara has always been a bit of a coffee expert. When she moved to Toronto 15 years ago, she found herself underwhelmed by the coffee choices available to her. She identified this business opportunity and thus, Sparkplug Coffee was born.

"There were lots of opportunities for coffee 'on the go', but nothing for people wanting coffee at home. This is mostly because we're buying beans that aren't fresh and have been in the supply chain for too long," says Kara.

At Sparkplug, the beans are delivered as soon as they're roasted. The beans are blends from all over the coffee world: Brazil, Columbia and Honduras, to name a few. "When I travelled to Ethiopia, every

cup of coffee I had was amazing. They would roast the beans before each pot. Now, we make sure there are Ethiopian beans in almost every blend that Sparkplug offers."

Now in its third year, Sparkplug Coffee consists of a small team of coffee enthusiasts that are competing with the larger online delivery services, including many "coffee of the month" clubs. Their dedication to offering a reliable product that meets people's coffee habits is clearly working, and they're looking forward to launching new initiatives soon: A new referral program will allow customers to earn free coffee for each friend they recommend. And their expanding coffee equipment selection will further help customers brew a perfect cup, every time.

But you'll need to go online to get started. Sparkplug only sells directly to coffee drinkers, so their product cannot be bought in stores (where it risks sitting on a shelf for too long). Order from SparkplugCoffee.com and customize the flavour and size of bag that's right for you. Sign up for their Autopilot subscription service and your coffee is ordered on a regular basis. For those living in Corktown, don't be surprised if Kara zips by on her vintage Vespa to deliver your coffee herself. It's all part of Sparkplug's entrepreneurial charm!