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“The best and most  
authentic espresso in  
town.”

*The Oregonian Arts & Entertainment*

platter

food finds, restaurant news and dining trends



JAMIE FRANCIS/THE OREGONIAN

Andrea Spella makes great espresso from his own roasted beans and sells it from a cart called Spella Caffe on the corner of Southwest Ninth Avenue and Alder Street.

**THE BUZZ ON PORTLAND'S BEST ESPRESSO** — Portland has a new espresso king: Andrea Spella. Five days a week from his **Spella Caffe** cart in downtown Portland, Spella pulls his espresso the Old World way with an Italian Rancilio lever machine. The results? The best and most authentic espresso in town.

Spella claims the manual pull gives him more control than the automatic machines used in most cafes. The top layer of crema — that golden foamy crown from the final stream of espresso “is the most important part of the equation,” he says. Smooth, rich and chocolaty, every cup Spella pulls is sheer liquid gold (\$1.25).

When Spella isn't working at the stand, he's in a nearby rented garage roasting beans. He uses from-the-farm beans from Brazil (not Indonesian, the preferred bean of most Northwest roasters), where a lower elevation produces softer beans that result in a sweeter, Italian style coffee. “These beans are tricky to work with,” he says. “You have to coddle them and spend time, slowly and gently roasting them.” Spella's beans retail for \$6 a half-pound.

Coffee was important in his half-Polish, half-Neopolitan household, where as a toddler he began sipping stovetop espresso. Raised above his parents' Chicago bakery, he confesses to being a chubby kid: “I used to sneak down at night and eat too many cookies.” For

a sweet option at his coffee counter, look for walnut espresso brownies (\$1.75) made by a friend of Spella's.

Spella knows good gelato, too. He serves three changing flavors of **Stella Gelato**, Eugene's extraordinary but little-known artisan ice cream. Order a scoop (often hazelnut or pistachio or fruit sorbetto, \$2.25). Or better, get the affogato — Stella gelato drowned in Spella espresso: It will make you giddy (\$2.75).

Acclaimed Italian food writer Faith Heller Willinger was spreading the Spella gospel after visiting the stand on a recent visit to Portland. “The other ‘S’ coffees in town,” she says, have nothing on Spella's.

Spella hopes to have a sit-down cafe with live music in the next year or so. His motto, “I won't serve a coffee that's less than perfect,” is proving true.

*Spella Caffe, corner of Southwest Ninth Avenue and Alder Street, 503-421-9723; 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Friday.*

— Teri Gelber  
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