

ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

Saturday, October 1, 2022 - www.arabnews.com



Celebrating
**Saudi
Gahwa**

Special issue
marking
**International
Coffee Day**

Year of Saudi Coffee



Year of Saudi Coffee



A Cup of Gahwa

The taste and traditions of Saudi coffee

FROM SEED TO CUP



1 The technique of cultivating the Khawlani coffee bean in Saudi Arabia's mountainous southwest has been handed down from generation to generation.



2 A coffee plant begins life as a seed, planted in a soil-filled mesh bag and kept in a cool, shady place. After about four months the seedling is strong and tall enough to be transferred to the terraces.



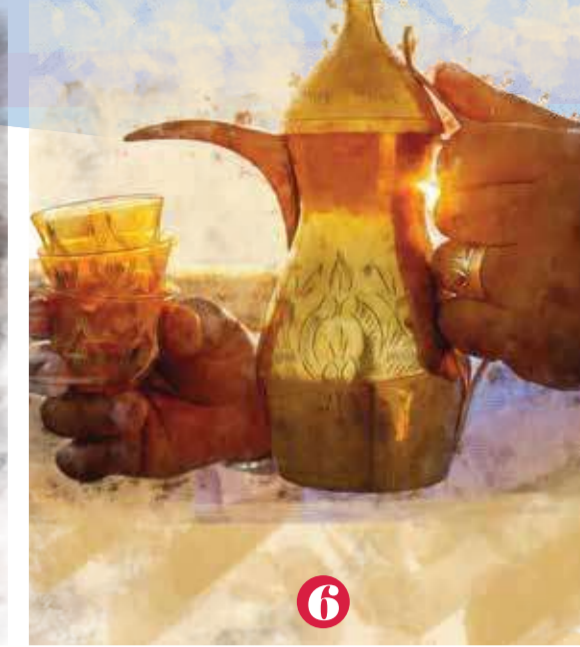
3 It will be three or even four years before the first fragrant white flowers begin to appear on the branches of the tree. Two or three months later, the flowers begin to fall, leaving behind the buds on the branches that will grow into the cherries.



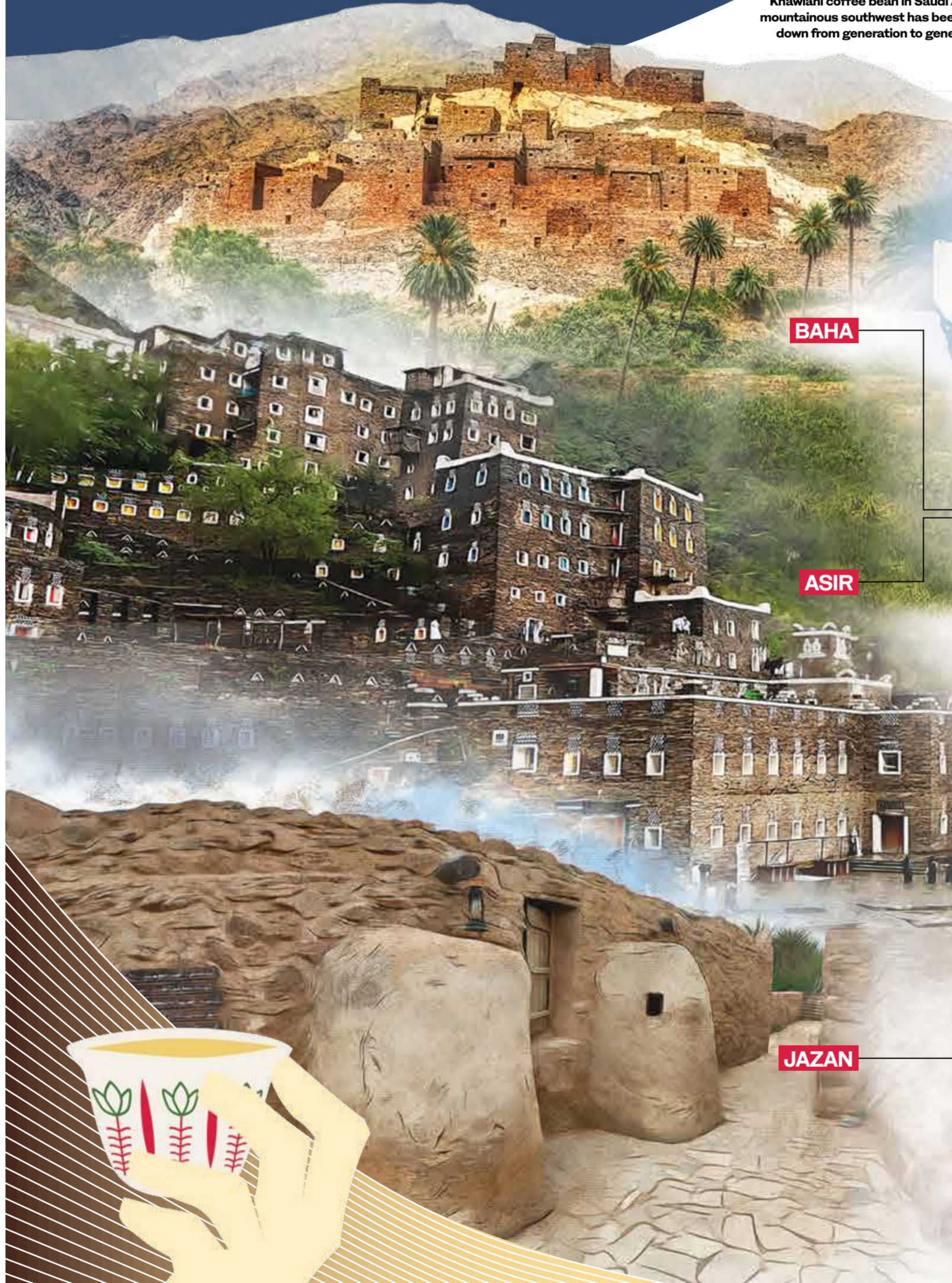
4 Over the next six months the round, green fruits gradually turn yellow, then orange and, finally, red, indicating they are ripe. Ready for picking, each fruit must be twisted off the branch with great care, to minimize damage and ensure next season's crop will grow.



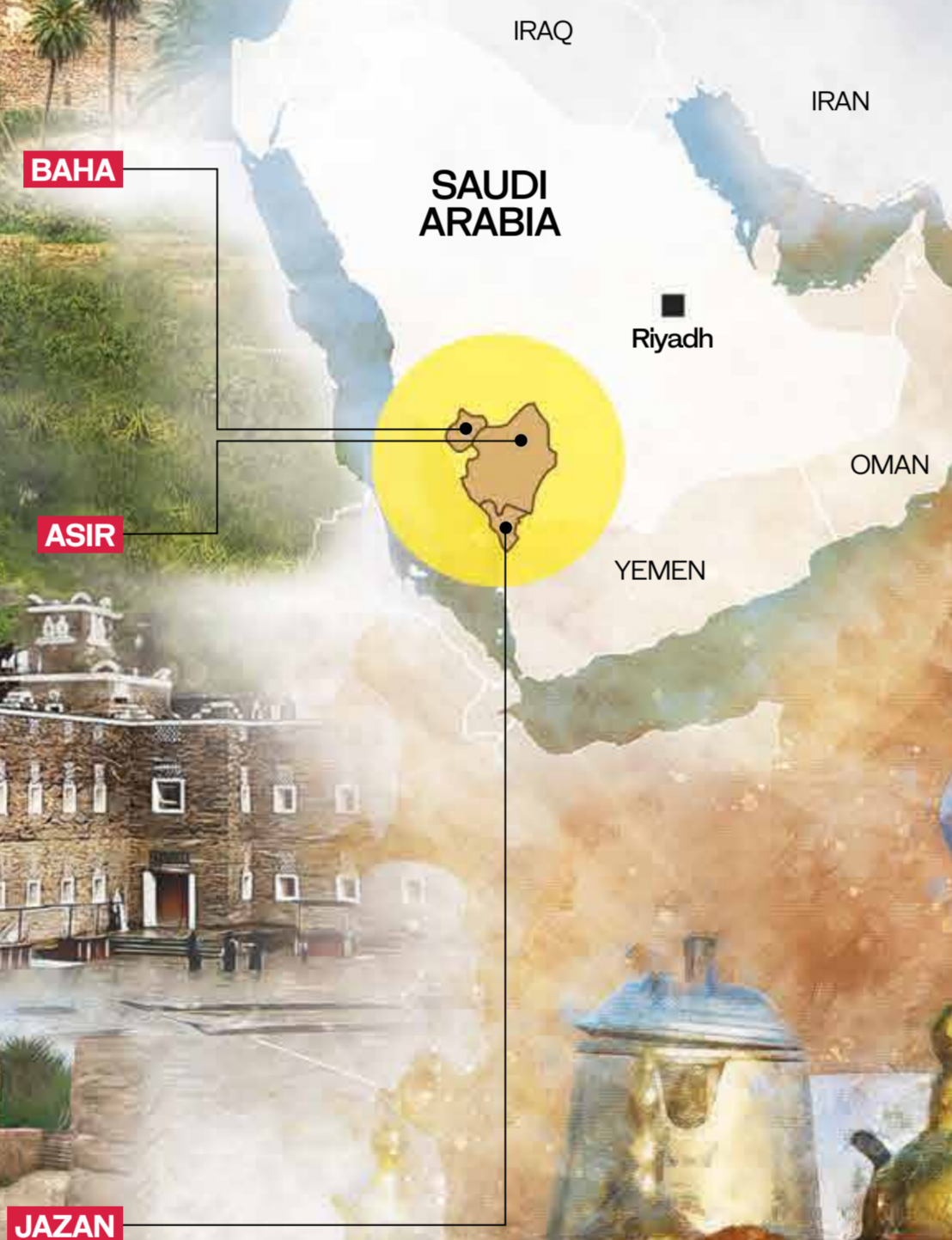
5 After this, the fruits are laid out to dry, often on the rooftops of the farm buildings. Finally, the skins of the cherries are carefully removed and the seeds inside – the coffee "beans" – are roasted, ready to be ground.



6 COFFEE IS SERVED



WHERE THE GREEN GOLD GROWS



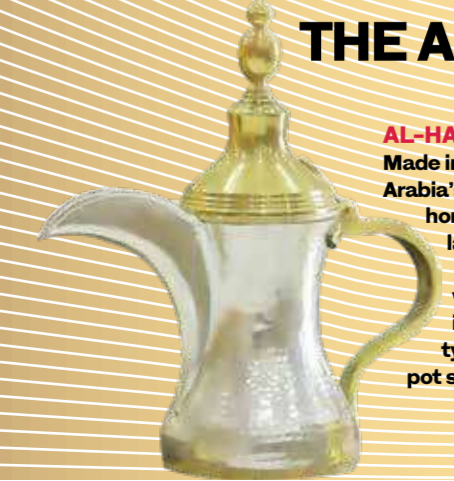
Saudi coffee is an important element of our rich culture, because it conveys deep meanings of generosity, hospitality and cultural diversity.



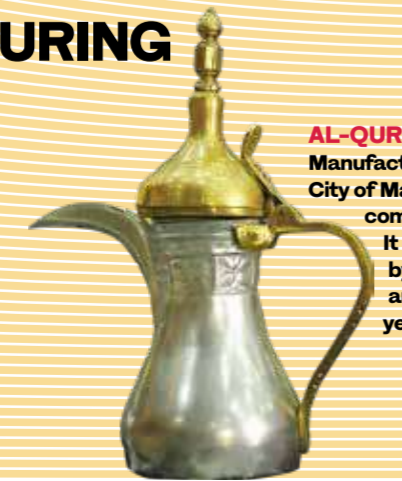
DALLAH: THE TRADITIONAL COFFEE POT



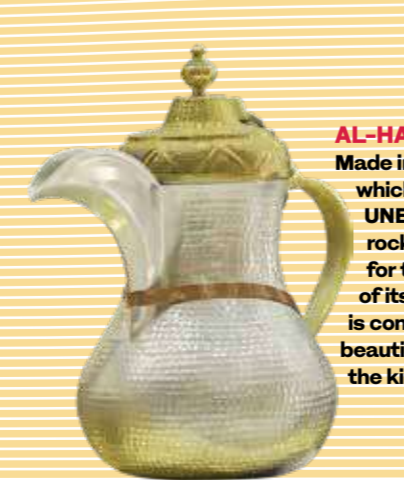
THE ART OF POURING



AL-HASAWEYA
Made in Al-Ahsa in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, home of the world's largest oasis. Traditionally white, with a yellow lid, it is one of the oldest types of coffee pot still in use.



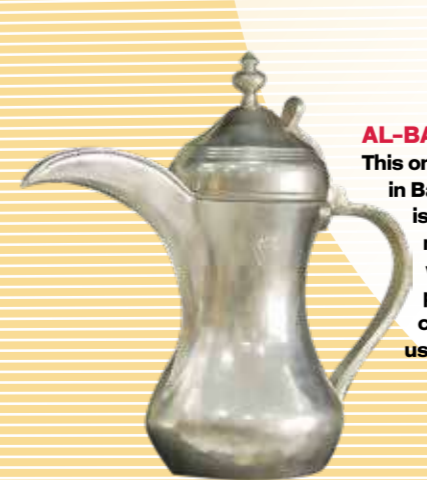
AL-QURASHEYA
Manufactured in the Holy City of Makkah, this dallah comes in three sizes. It is characterized by its carvings and its white and yellow coloring.



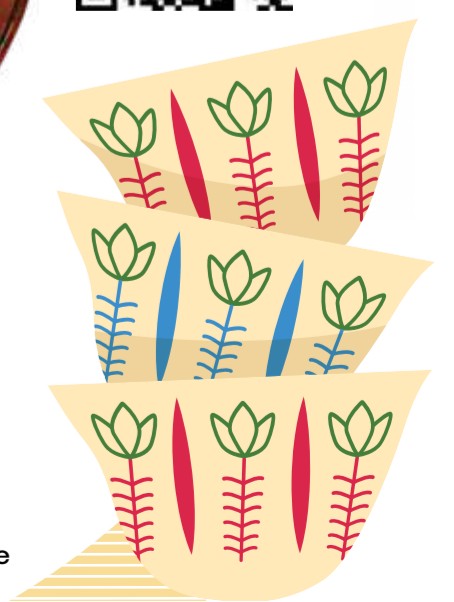
AL-HAILEYA
Made in the Hail region, which is famous for its UNESCO-listed ancient rock carvings. Known for the high quality of its manufacture, it is considered the most beautiful dallah in the Kingdom.

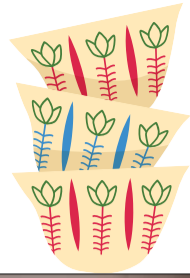


AL-HEJAZEYA
Manufactured in Hejaz, and famous for its high quality and distinctive shape, this is the most popular dallah in Saudi Arabia.



AL-BAGHDADIYA
This one is manufactured in Baghdad. Inside its lid is a funnel that makes a sound when moving the pot and pouring the coffee. It is widely used in the Kingdom.





Spotlight



Year of Saudi Coffee

The Khawlani brew

Saudi coffee offers a taste of culture and tradition



1 Only the owner of the house, his son or a relative should pour coffee for guests, but the older person should not serve the coffee if a younger person is present.

2 The host holds the coffee pot with the left hand while carrying cups in the right and serving coffee to the sitting guests.

Jonathan Gornall London

For centuries, coffee has played a central role in the social life of Saudis. It is nothing less than a national symbol of identity, hospitality and generosity, and the focus of gatherings formal and informal, from the tents of the Bedouin of old in the deserts of Najd, to the stylish new cafes in the Kingdom's cities.

But what some might not appreciate, even as 2022 is celebrated in the Kingdom as the Year of Saudi Coffee, is that when it comes to the planet's most popular drink, the whole world owes a debt of gratitude to Saudi Arabia — and a special bean that goes by the name "Khawlani."

Today, coffee is most closely associated with countries such as Brazil and Colombia.

But the potential of the coffee tree, which grows wild only in Ethiopia, was first recognized and developed by Arabs, as far back as the 14th century.

As William Ukers, editor of the Tea and Coffee Trade Journal in New York, wrote in "All About Coffee," his exhaustive 1922 study: "The Arabians must be given the credit for discovering and promoting the use of the beverage, and also for promoting the propagation of the plant, even if they found it in Abyssinia (Ethiopia)."

Hundreds of years ago, discovering that the plant Coffea arabica thrived in the climate of the lush mountains of the land that would become Saudi Arabia, they brought it across the Red Sea to the Arabian Peninsula.

There, they successfully cultivated it on terraces cut into the flanks of the Sarawat Mountains, perfecting the art of roasting and brewing the seeds of its fruit to make the drink the world would come to know and love.

Not for nothing is the Khawlani coffee bean known in Saudi Arabia as "the green gold of Jazan."

The bean, and the knowledge and practices related to cultivating it, occupies such a central

role in the heritage and traditional social rituals of Saudi Arabia that it is now being considered for inclusion on UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

According to the document submitted to UNESCO by the Ministry of Culture, the Khawlani bean is named for Khawlan bin Amir, a common ancestor of the coffee-growing



Not for nothing is the Khawlani coffee bean known in Saudi Arabia as 'the green gold of Jazan.'

tribes that live in the mountains of Jazan province.

"During the harvest season," the document says, "farmers break the monotony of the work by singing poem verses. One person sings and the group repeats after to create a harmonic rhythm as they pick coffee beans."

"Men and women both roast then grind the beans used to prepare coffee."

Importantly, the skills are

handed down from generation to generation: "Families encourage youngsters to work in the lands, starting with minor tasks, until they develop the skills and know-how needed to cultivate coffee trees and the processing of the coffee beans."

Coffee, adds the UNESCO document, "is a symbol of generosity in Saudi Arabia," and the tribes of Khawlani personify this "through their

dedication and their passion for this practice."

And while the Khawlani coffee bean accounts for almost all the homegrown coffee eagerly consumed in the kingdom, it has remained one of the country's best-kept secrets.

In the Year of Saudi Coffee, the world will taste coffee the way the Saudis do, brewed from the fruit of the descendants of the original coffee trees.

4 The cup should be poured one-third full. Any more suggests the host is trying to hurry unwelcome guests. Less implies the host is being stingy.

3 The server must remain standing until the guests have finished drinking. The guest should always hold the cup between index finger and thumb while drinking.

5 The host should drink the first cup, a tradition designed to reassure guests the coffee was not poisoned. In the past, the fourth cup served was highly significant, as it committed the guest who drank it to side with the host in conflict.

6 A guest who wishes to indicate they have had their fill rapidly shakes the cup, so as not to interrupt anyone speaking in the majlis.

Year of Saudi Coffee



SAUDI COFFEE CO.

Wake up and smell the coffee: Saudi cafes embrace a new era

Creativity is key as a generation of young baristas transforms an industry by giving ancient traditions a modern twist

Rahaf Jambi Riyadh

“Arabic coffee” was officially changed to “Saudi coffee” in restaurants, cafes, stores and roasteries across the Kingdom early this year.

The announcement, by Culture Ministry spokesman Abdulrahman Al-Hussein, was made in conjunction with a ministry initiative designating 2022 as the Year of Saudi Coffee, as part of moves to enhance the Kingdom's identity and culture.

Since then, the number of young baristas in the Kingdom has increased, with many of them exploring creative adaptations of the traditional beverage and the ways of serving it.

Ridhwan Al-Momen said he wanted to work while studying, so he took a job with international cafe franchise the Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf.

“I had humble beginnings but when I learned about specialty coffee, I took a deep dive into this world and I can't get out of it,” he told Arab News.

“This is how many baristas of my generation feel.”

According to a UNESCO report, “serving Arabic coffee is an important aspect of hospitality in Arab societies and considered a ceremonial act of generosity.”

This is especially true in Saudi Arabia, where coffee plays a central role in age-old traditions of hospitality. As the Kingdom attracts more tourists, Saudi coffee has become one of its most intriguing attractions.

“Saudi coffee is an important part of our lives. We grew up around it and we still serve it to guests,” said Al-Momen.

“I think it's a nice thing that there is a growing interest in Saudi coffee.”

The Kingdom's large youth population means that during this year of Saudi coffee, tradition is being combined with innovation.

“They (the younger generation) took things from the older



Coffee shop Caffeine Lab created a brand new outlet called Azha to specialize in Saudi coffee, young barista Ridhwan Al-Momen told Arab News. Supplied

generation and gave it a modern touch with new additions,” said Abdullah Al-Shareef, who works at the Wide Awake Cafe in Jeddah.

Al-Momen now works as a barista at a cafe called Azha in

Jeddah's House Hotel that offers a variety of teas, coffees and iced beverages, as well as croissants and desserts. It serves its Saudi coffee in a dallah, a traditional Arabic coffee pot, with dates.

“The Saudi coffee we offer is a specialty coffee from expensively harvested beans, and we present it in a unique way,” he said. Whole roasted beans are ground and the recipe created from scratch.

Typically, cardamom is the star ingredient of Saudi coffee but recipes vary, with some also including cloves and saffron.

Spices, beans and roasting methods can also vary, which

means each outlet offers its own distinctive coffee flavor.

At the Dubai Expo 2020, Sard Cafe offered guests a novel insight into the various types of Saudi coffee. Blends from across 13 regions of the Kingdom were presented, along with information cards that explained the characteristics of each.

“Coffee has become a culture,” Al-Shareef said, which means that working as a barista can be a highly lucrative career for men and women in the Kingdom.

As the coffee industry grows in the country, government and private organizations are investing in a range of initiatives to support and expand the sector.

In July, the Saudi Culinary Arts Commission signed a cooperation agreement with the Saudi Coffee Co. for a number of initiatives to



Saudi coffee is an important part of our lives. We grew up around it and we still serve it to guests

preserve the heritage of Saudi coffee. They include a program to develop a media library and local culinary arts stories, as well as the design and marketing of tourism routes to promote coffee plantations.

The partnership will also support Saudi coffee events and festivals, issue licenses to coffee experts, encourage local production, promote the company's products in online stores specializing in Saudi culinary arts, and set standards for the processing of coffee beans.

Through partnerships with authorities associated with the Saudi coffee industry, the endeavor aims to develop the sector, improve the quality of coffee products, empower those working and investing in coffee, and share the Kingdom's coffee heritage with the world.

GAHWA

Beyond the bean: A taste of the Kingdom — in a cup

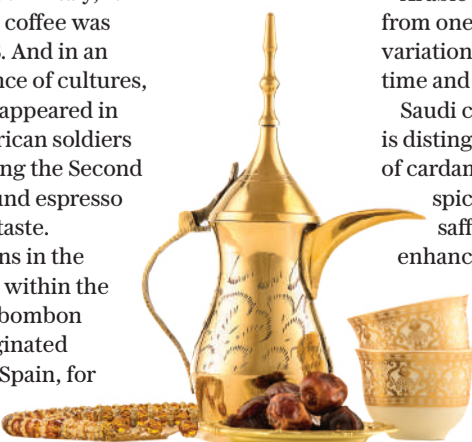
Nada Jan Jeddah

Coffee, the ubiquitous beverage, is as varied as the beans from which it is made.

Almost every country has its own unique coffee recipe, offering foreigners an insight into the culture.

Espresso originated in Italy, for example, while drip coffee was developed in the US. And in an interesting confluence of cultures, the Americano first appeared in Italy thanks to American soldiers stationed there during the Second World War, who found espresso too strong for their taste.

There are variations in the types of coffee even within the same country. Cafe bombon and the cortado originated in different parts of Spain, for instance. In India, South Indian



filter coffee is known around the country for its milky-sweet blend of coffee and chicory.

Coffee connoisseurs analyze the origin of the beans, the freshness of the roast, the grind size and so on. But in certain parts of the world, particularly the Middle East, coffee goes beyond the bean.

Arabic coffee, or “qahwa,” differs from one country to another, with variations in the bean, roast, brew time and spices.

Saudi coffee is no exception and is distinguished by the addition of cardamom. In some regions, spices such as cloves and saffron are added to further enhance the flavor.

The drink is not suited to takeaway mugs and drinking “on the go” but is an experience to be savored with every sip. In keeping with the



Visitors to the Saudi pavilion at the 2022 Terra Madre food conference in Turin, Italy, this month had a chance to discover and sample coffee and dishes from the Kingdom. Culinary Arts Commission

Kingdom's traditional hospitality, it is often served to guests paired with dates, dried fruit, nuts or chocolate. However, the unique spiced coffee is not for everyone.

American Micha J., 45, described it as an acquired taste. He said he initially found the flavors different from those he was used to but has grown to like it.

Rommel Gregore, 57, from the Philippines, said that the flavors “did not register well at first,” possibly because he was more

used to drinking instant coffee.

Saudi coffee is often served to guests at home but is just as commonplace in offices.

Gregore said he was introduced to it at work during a break, while Micha tried it for the first time at a friend's house, where it was served along with dates.

The distinctive taste of Saudi coffee has been exported across continents, with one Toronto cafe called Hailed (Arabic for “cardamom”) serving it to

customers along with dates and a tahini dip. Much like the Kingdom itself, Saudi coffee is increasingly gaining recognition around the region and the world.

Yerin, 27, from South Korea, told Arab News: “Some countries, such as Ethiopia, are well known for their tasty coffee beans and some, like Italy, have specialty coffee.”

Still, most of them taste much the same to her. “But Arabic coffee is unique and totally different from others,” she added.

Year of Saudi Coffee



I invite some of the girls over and we make coffee; everyone brings a sweet, and we just laugh and talk.



Left: Workers from three generations harvest coffee beans in the Jizan region. Below: Saudi coffee is part of family gathering from Eid celebrations to weekly get-togethers. AFP, Supplied

KHAWLANI BREW

Taste of home: How coffee became Saudis' cup of tea

More than a drink, the brew is a celebration that brings families and friends together in times of joy and grief

Lama Alhamawi Riyadh

Roasted cardamom, cloves and saffron brewed together with lightly roasted coffee, served in a dallah (traditional coffee pot) and poured into finjals (small round cups). That is the coffee table setting of many families, bringing together generations throughout the Kingdom.

From the near-intoxicating aroma of the spices to the traditional serveware, Saudi coffee goes beyond a drink — it is a celebration of the Kingdom's culture and heritage.

"Saudi coffee is not just a drink; it's a part of our family traditions and values," Noura bin Mohammed told Arab News.

"A family gathering is not a true gathering without two things: Saudi coffee and dates."

Bin Mohammed, 22, is studying in the US, and says that, being away from home, the beverage is even more special. "When I make Saudi coffee, the entire room smells like home, like my mom's kitchen — the feeling is not the same with tea or espresso," she said. "It's a part of our family memories."

Every Friday, her family would gather to share coffee, sweets and laughter — a ritual she misses while she is away from home.

Bin Mohammed is not alone, however, with several other Saudi students at her university yearning for the same familiar comfort.

So she established a weekly gathering with her fellow Saudi students who share a cup — or dallah — of Saudi coffee and sweets.

"I invite some of the girls over and we make coffee; everyone brings a sweet, and we just laugh and talk about the week we have had," she said. "It's a nice feeling knowing I'm in Houston and my family is in Riyadh, but every Friday we're both drinking Saudi coffee, and talking and laughing."

Would the feeling be different if the group gathered over tea or American coffee? The gathering simply would not be complete without Saudi coffee, bin Mohammed said.

"If the ladies sat down to find American coffee in front of them, they would have jokingly asked me if I had run out of saffron or cardamom for the coffee," she said.

A small cup of coffee carries decades of history laced with love, hospitality and generosity, uniting and comforting family and friends



in times of celebration and grief.

Renad Khashoggi who lives in Jeddah with her family, has Saudi coffee whenever she visits a friend's home "because it is a traditional way of hospitality in Saudi Arabia."

Although the drink is customary at weddings and family gatherings,

it is also served at funerals, Khashoggi said.

Unlike regular tea or coffee, Saudi coffee is tied to family rituals that represent the cultural identity of the Kingdom. It is common in Saudi culture for families and friends to visit each other's homes frequently.

Over time, these gatherings have been characterized by the presence of Saudi coffee, which itself has become symbolic of the hospitality and generosity synonymous with Saudi culture.

However, while Saudi coffee's presence is pervasive across the Kingdom, its taste is not.

"What makes it a unique experience is when we have various types of Saudi coffee from different regions," said Jeddah resident Momena Alamoudi.

Variations in beans and brewing methods have allowed Alamoudi

and her friends to explore different methods and flavors.

"Actually, I'm not a coffeeholic or addicted to drinking coffee," said Alamoudi, who only has Saudi coffee during weekend gatherings with friends and family.

That shows the drink's purpose is not simply to deliver a "caffeine hit," but rather allow the drinker to savor the taste, sip by sip, while spending time with their loved ones. As Alamoudi puts it: "Saudi coffee must be there on all occasions and parties."

The sentiment also rings true for Jeddah resident Noor Alnahdi, who associates iftars in Ramadan with the aroma and taste of Saudi coffee.

"We must have Saudi coffee with dates to break our fast," she said.

Unlike any other kind of coffee or beverage, Saudi coffee comes with a sense of heritage.

CAFE COUTURE

Gift of pride: Saudi coffee is a blend of nostalgia and modernity

Ghadi Joudah Riyadh

"Cardamom, cloves, ginger and a pinch of saffron — that's the scent that envelops me as my grandparents rush us into their dining room, teasing us that, once again, we've barely made it on time," 16-year-old Lana Ghassan said.

That comforting aroma, reminiscent of home and family, is often associated with hospitality, generosity and welcoming hugs at formal family gatherings and occasions.

For many, it is a tradition. Every evening, fresh coffee is brewed and served in a dallah, a traditional coffee pot.

"When I inhale that specific scent, it takes me to a very special memory of mine; my parents, brother, aunts and cousins gathered around to break our fast as the muezzin calls for prayer every Ramadan," Ghassan told Arab News.

Today, Saudi coffee has transcended tradition to become part of Saudis' self-identity. In a

blend of nostalgia and modernity, it has become a matter of national pride for a generation that relies on the beverage as an everyday necessity.

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has witnessed a boom in the coffee industry, with new cafes and roasteries opening up in the malls and streets of the Kingdom.

Coffee consumption in Saudi Arabia increased by 4 percent annually from 2016 to 2021, and is expected to grow by 5 percent each year until 2026, according to data from Euromonitor.

The commercial name of Arabic coffee was changed to Saudi coffee following a Ministry of Commerce announcement early in the year.

In May, the Kingdom's sovereign wealth fund launched the Saudi Coffee Company to develop the national industry, boost production capacity, and promote Saudi coffee beans as a global product.

As the government makes investments into the production and promotion of coffee, local cafes have been quick to



The Kingdom's thriving cafe scene is attracting a new generation of coffee lovers. Getty Images

That comforting aroma is often associated with hospitality, generosity and welcoming hugs.

embrace Saudi coffee, adapting and adding it to their range of specialty coffees.

Toqa Coffee, for instance, serves spiced coffee, such as saffron latte and cardamom cappuccino. Its "toqaccino" Saudi coffee, which offers a new twist on the traditional drink, is gaining popularity among customers.

These "modern blends" help coffee shops garner attention and demonstrate the creativity of the coffee industry, said Abdullah Al-Shareef, coffee specialist at

the Wide Awake coffee shop in Jeddah. "Saudi coffee has become popular with the current generation," he said, adding that coffee shops are creating new flavors to meet and bolster demand.

Another cafe, Bafarat, was established in 1952, and today serves everything from artisan coffee to traditional Saudi coffee at outlets in Jeddah and London.

The cafe blends, roasts and distributes daily from its roasting plant to ensure the freshest coffee possible. Its Saudi coffee, lightly roasted and infused with fragrant cardamom and saffron, is served in a dallah.

The swanky new Azha Cafe in the House Hotel in Jeddah is part of local company Caffeine Lab, which specializes in everything from professional equipment costing thousands of riyals to everyday coffee accessories and beans.

"Caffeine Lab is a local specialty coffee shop that went the extra mile to create a separate cafe called Azha, which specializes in

Saudi coffee," barista Ridhwan Al-Momen told Arab News.

"Our specialty Saudi coffee is harvested from Caffeine Lab's premium crops, to ensure the freshest coffee blend is served to the customer," he added.

Suhaib Bahassan, co-founder of Bancam, a casual dining restaurant in Riyadh that serves specialty breakfast and coffee, said: "Saudi coffee is an integral part of people's daily lives, and has become a cornerstone in meetings, homes and outside."

Saudi coffee "is a wonderful example of hospitality in Saudi Arabia," he added. It is especially popular among young people, and because "the current generation is open to development" with regards to Saudi coffee, the drink will become the "preferred coffee for the current and future generation."

More than a symbol of pride for Saudi Arabia, Saudi coffee has spread around the Kingdom and beyond to become a part of every Saudi's self-identity.



Coffee is a major part of Saudi Arabia's cultural heritage. The outlets currently available in the Kingdom range from traditional stores, through standard cafes, to modern, specialized takes on cafe culture. Saudi Ministry of Culture

KINGDOM CAFES

From traditional to quirky: the ultimate guide to Saudi coffee shops

Cafes that are cool for cats, gamers or busy workers? The Kingdom has it covered

Afshan Aziz Jeddah

Coffee lovers in Saudi Arabia have often visited cafes to enjoy their favorite local brew. In recent years, however, the Kingdom has witnessed a growing trend of people visiting a range of cafes, coffee houses and kiosks simply to enjoy their ambience.

From grab-and-go stores to drive-through outlets, commercial coffee options in the Kingdom have surged, with so-called "new wave" coffee shops bridging the gap between traditional Saudi coffee practices and a new generation of rituals pioneered overseas.

Six different types of coffee shops can be spotted across the Kingdom: standard cafes, coffee houses, grab-n-go, co-working cafes, themed coffee shops and art cafes.

Standard cafes are coffee-centric shops that serve the most popular beverages accompanied by an assortment of food items for breakfast or lunch. These cafes are popular destinations for solo coffee lovers, or those who want to enjoy a cup with friends or loved ones.

In Jeddah, Riyadh and Makkah, cafes such as Cup and Couch, Urth Caffe, Roots Coffee and Asante Coffee Shop fall into this category.

Coffee houses are similar, but are located in a more-intimate setting resembling a living room. These outlets usually have free internet access but do not offer table-service. Basic Coffee,



Locals Cafe, Camel Step and Troy Coffee Lounge are a few examples from across the Kingdom.

Grab-n-go, drive-thru or kiosk outlets are usually part of an international chain, such as Starbucks, Tim Hortons and Emmy's, and are tailored for coffee lovers on the move. Seating and food options are limited, but they offer a wide variety of hot and cold coffee drinks.

Co-working cafes cater mainly to those seeking to change their working environment while still enjoying a relatively focused environment with reliable



Several different types of coffee shops are found across the kingdom, from the organic to the pet-friendly. Photos supplied

Standard cafes are popular destinations for solo coffee lovers, or those who want to enjoy a cup with friends or loved ones.



internet connection and comfortable seating arrangements. This type of cafe quickly became popular during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many office workers switched to hybrid or remote working.

Recently, quirky and themed coffee shops, including pet cafes, have gained popularity in the Kingdom. Popular in several countries, including Japan, pet cafes are a destination for those wanting to play with animals while enjoying a freshly brewed coffee.

In the Kingdom, pet cafes include Cat Lounge in Jeddah, Cup and Cat cafe in Riyadh, and the Barking Lot in Alkhobar.

Gaming cafes offering a selection of board games, VR games or arcade games are also increasing in popularity. These outlets are an attractive destination for gaming

enthusiasts or those simply looking for a quirky alternative to traditional coffee shops.

Locals Cafe in Jeddah, Cup and Dice cafe in Makkah and Takwa Board Game Cafe in Riyadh are among the growing number of popular examples in the Kingdom.

Art cafes offer visitors the chance to enjoy their favorite cup of coffee with a dash of culture.

One popular example is Arty Cafe in Jeddah, which offers customers an empty canvas on which to draw and paint. Another popular choice for art and coffee lovers is Medium Art Gallery and Cafe in Riyadh, where people can enjoy their drink surrounded by exclusive art pieces.

