

COMMERCE

GROWING OREGON

JULY 2007

UPFRONT | sustainability

COFFEE CRUSADE

Portland Roasting hopes to green the way Portlanders consume their morning 'Joe.'

Zambia, Zimbabwe, Costa Rica, and Guatemala top the list of exotic locales Portland Roasting employees have visited in the past six months. With an eye toward making good on its own premise, the small business that specializes in free-trade and organic coffee regularly sends its employees on treks around the globe to work with growers in third-world countries on development projects such as building water treatment plants and constructing schools.

Recently, however, the company's taken on a project with a more local – although still sustainable – bent.

Working with the city of Portland's Office of Sustainable De-

Trash Talk: Americans throw away **14.4** billion paper cups each year. The petroleum used to make those discarded cups is enough to heat **8,300** homes for a year.

velopment, Portland Roasting is trying to introduce the Ecotainer, the coffee industry's first fully biodegradable to-go cup, to the city's wealth of java junkies.

In conventional coffee cups, the waxy liner that prevents hot coffee from soaking through is a petroleum-based plastic that takes years to break down in a landfill. Even when the paper becomes worm food, a ball of wax remains.

The Ecotainer, developed and sold by International Paper, contains a corn-based liner that, when exposed to a heated composting process, completely breaks down within 30 days. And the outer layer of paper is made from trees harvested under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative guidelines.

The difficulty is that most coffee shops don't have a composting service. And paper contaminated with bits of food waste cannot be included in the city's recycling program.

"The cup itself is a challenge; it's way before any (composting) infrastructure is set up in the U.S.," says



DAN CARTER/COMMERCE

Mark Stell, owner of Portland Roasting, "but Portland is the perfect target city for it."

The city of Portland began a voluntary composting program several years ago to encourage businesses not to dump food waste, including the paper used to serve food.

Portland Roasting is offering to sell the cups at a premium of 2 cents each to its vendor network of mom-and-pop coffee shops around the city. And the city is partnering to help the businesses arrange composting pick-up for their used coffee grounds and Ecotainer cups.

The eco-friendly cups are currently being test marketed by two U.S. coffee companies, one on each coast. As a Specialty Coffee Association of America award winner for sustainable practices, Portland Roasting was a natural fit to do the West coast test.

If the program is a success, International Paper will roll out the cups nationwide and plans to eventually top it off with a completely compostable lid. —Libby Tucker

Around Town July 19

Internet Strategy Forum Executive Summit

WHAT: Industry professionals offer advice on how to use the internet for business success.

WHERE: The Governor Hotel, 614 S.W. 11th, Portland

INFO: www.portlandadfed.com

July 19

CREW Portland's Annual Summer Wine Social

WHERE: McGinn's Russell St. Wine Merchants, 807 N. Russell, Portland

COST: \$60

INFO: www.crew-portland.org

July 20

Internet Strategist Career Symposium

WHERE: The Governor Hotel, 611 S.W. 11th Ave., Portland

COST: Call for cost

INFO: www.internetstrategyforum.org