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Candy bars with perks

No coffee cups here ... this caffeine is for chewing

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STAFF WRITER

Except for inside mugs or insulated cardboard cups, coffee hasn't always meant, well, *coffee*.

Many candy bars, liqueurs and other coffee knockoffs are actually coffee-flavored, without a single bean. And even goodies that try to stay true to the bean often require processed sugar or a heavy dose of chocolate to mellow coffee's strong taste.

This is what makes Caffe Acapella bars unique. They're touted as the world's first and only gourmet coffee bars – with the strong taste of coffee and the smooth feel of chocolate, two flavors Americans love the most, according to owner Kathy Ninness, owner of Acapella Foods.

"The more we thought about it, though, the more we were drawn toward a bar made out of just fresh gourmet coffee," she said.

"The espresso flavor is so rich," said Annette Breckenridge, co-owner of Ridgewood Bakery and Café, where the bars have been sold since mid-November. "They gave me the feeling that I was eating a chocolate bar, only with more flavor."

They look like bittersweet chocolate, but Caffe Acapella bars are dominated by a rich espresso flavor, sometimes accented with bits of toffee or pockets of caramel. Not only does every bar contain milled high-elevation

Arabica beans, each also carries the smoothness of cocoa butter, the natural extract of cocoa beans. There isn't a trace of chocolate flavor to get in the way.

Being as they're all-natural, the bars also pack an energy boost not commonly associated with candy bars, Ninness said. "Since the bars are made from roasted espresso beans, each bar has about the same amount of caffeine as a real cup of gourmet coffee."

Each bar weighs about 2 ounces and retails for \$2.99. Four espresso-centric flavors are available: Cappuccino Connoisseur, Caramel Macchiato Classico, Espresso Serenade and Toffee Espresso Concerto.

The coffee bars were introduced over the summer at the Fancy Food Show in New York and are beginning to appear in local bakeries and gourmet shops.

"They're outrageously good – much better than chocolate," said Rick Breitstein of The Cheese Shop of Ridgewood, which also sells the bars. "I'm not a coffee person, either. I don't drink coffee. I don't even like coffee, and I just love the way they taste."

Outside of Ridgewood, Caffe Acapella bars can also be found in Fellini Gifts at Tice's Corner in Woodcliff Lake and La Strada Delicatessen in Midland Park. Ninness plans to have them in a variety of other North Jersey gourmet coffee shops, wineries and high-end kitchen stores in the near future.

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On the Web:
acapellafoods.com



Caffe Acapella bars, touted as the world's first and only gourmet coffee bars, pack an energy boost.

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