

'Suspended Coffee' Passes on Goodwill

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It is not out of place every now and then to buy a cup of coffee for a friend, but a new trend spreading across Moscow allows you to now extend this favor to strangers.

Podveshenny kofe, or suspended coffee, is a system in cafes where customers are given the opportunity to order an extra cup of coffee for someone else. A notice is placed on a board every time a "suspended coffee" has been paid for and is open for anyone to take advantage of.

The movement draws origins from an old Italian tradition, where customers would pay extra for their chosen beverage. The barista would log it down as a paid for, but untaken, item and then serve it free to any customer who was interested. Over time, this practice slowly died down, but it has recently been revived, first in Naples and then in cities around the world. It officially reached Moscow last November when chain-shop Koffein decided to open its doors to the concept. The first store to serve a cup of coffee using this system was at Sretensky Bulvar. Since then, the service has expanded to 14 of its cafes.

Following this success, several other cafes across Moscow have taken Koffein's initiative. One particular cafe located at Bankovsky Pereulok has now started serving suspended vodka. Nineteen-year-old waitress, Lera Suslova, thought of this idea one day while serving a customer at work.

"It is a Russian tradition to drink vodka, and I thought it would be a fun and unusual idea," Suslova said. "Only two people have paid for one, but we are hoping this number will increase in due time."

The system of suspended beverages has so far received mixed reactions. While there are some members of the public who are in support of the scheme, there are others who are skeptical, criticizing the movement for simply being another marketing ploy.

"If I wanted to be charitable, I could give money to the homeless. This just seems like a postmodern trick," said Dmitry Baranov, a 27-year-old psychotherapist.

Despite this criticism, those working at coffee shops that offer the service are adamant that it is simply for a good cause.

"I can say we don't make a lot of money from suspended coffees. We are just giving customers an easy way of showing that they are good people," said Liza Panteleyeva, a spokesperson for Koffein.

Suspended coffee is served at Koffein. 26 Novoslobodskaya Ulitsa. Metro Mendeleyevskaya. Tel. +7 906 049-54-37. www.koffein.ru. Suspended vodka is served at Art. Lebedev Studio. 5 Bankovsky Pereulok. Metro Lubyanka. Tel. +7 495 624-74-73. www.store.artlebedev.com

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