

by Lane Strauss

# Sarah Wilson-Jones

Superbarista and CEO of Phoenix Coffee

**K**nock, knock. *Who's there?* Java. *Java who?* Java good day? Well, you did if you're like a bazillion Americans who start every morning with a good cup of coffee. "The thing is, if you get a nice morning buzz going, anything seems possible," says Sarah Wilson-Jones, CEO of Phoenix Coffee. Which could explain how the local chain, with locations in Cleveland Heights, Lakewood and Downtown, was honored recently by the Specialty Coffee Association of America for excellence in brewed coffee.

**So you call yourself Superbarista?**

It's a character I invented as kind of an educational tool to make coffee preparation more exciting. We all have names here, actually. There's the Renaissance Barista, The Bean Counter, Barista Barbie. Hey, if you can't have fun with what you do, why bother?

**How does Superbarista feel about that place with the green logo you see on every corner?**

You mean the place that roasts their coffee too dark, Charbucks?

**What makes coffee bad, other than being served in a cup that says, "I Love Unicorns?"**

Oh, it can be stale or under-roasted or a bad blend or the water's too cold. I take it you're not a big coffee drinker.

**No, but I like those fake cappuccinos from the gas station.**  
I'm sorry.

**Who was Joe in the whole "cup of joe" thing?**

I have no idea. But now I have to find out.

**How do you get to be Gold Cup certified?**

It's very complicated, actually. There's a lot of science involved. You need to find the proper balance of strength-soluble concentration and the extraction-soluble yield to reach the optimum balance.

**You had me at biscotti.**

It's a very exacting science. It took us three or four times before we became certified.

**How do you take your coffee?**

Black. I like a double espresso with 3 ounces of steamed half-and-half.

**Do coffee beans grow on trees?**

Yes, it's an evergreen.

**Those trees must never sleep.**

It actually takes a full year for a coffee bean to mature. And five full years for a tree to bear fruit.

**How about some good coffee trivia?**

Several hundred years ago, there was a captain in the French army who kept a few coffee seeds alive on a trip to Martinique. He used his own personal ration of water to keep them going. He even peed on them when he ran out of water.

**Maybe that was Joe.**

Joe the Peeing French Captain? Anything's possible, I guess. ■

