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### **The Richness of a Cup of Coffee**

Coffee is so deeply ingrained in our lives that we often overlook the richness of its history and its numerous health benefits. A couple of years ago, I listened to an Extension lesson on the benefits and history of coffee. I was struck by the numerous types of coffee and the different ways to brew it. I also learned that coffee has many health benefits and a rich and interesting history.

As the legend goes, around 850 AD, a goat herdsman in Ethiopia noticed that his goats were more energetic and had a restless night after eating the berries of a specific tree. Word quickly spread about the berries, and the tree or bush was named the coffee plant. The pits of the berries are known as coffee beans. Coffee eventually made its way worldwide and is the second most commonly consumed beverage.

Here in the U.S., we love our coffee. Our preference for coffee over tea began after the British placed a hefty tax on tea; after the Boston Tea Party, it became patriotic to drink coffee instead of tea. With coffee's increasing availability and affordability, it has become an American staple. With the rise of national coffee chains that offer social spaces and customizable options, our love of coffee has continued to grow.

Coffee is also known for its health benefits. If consumed in moderation, coffee can do more than wake us up in the morning. Recent scientific research has shown that coffee provides many health benefits.

- **Rich in Antioxidants-** Antioxidants can prevent or slow cell damage by free radicals. Oxidative stress can cause damage to cells and DNA, leading to wrinkles and an increased risk of carcinogenesis. Coffee is rich in antioxidants that help combat oxidative stress and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. The antioxidant content of coffee depends on how it is brewed. Instant coffee contains the highest number of antioxidants, with the following brewing methods: French press, standard drip brew, single serve (Keurig), and cold brew.
- **Diabetes-**Coffee may lower the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes for both men and women. It doesn't matter if you drink decaf or regular coffee.
- **Parkinson's Disease-** Coffee may reduce or delay the onset of Parkinson's Disease. It may also help to improve symptoms of the disease.
- **Cardiovascular Health-** Coffee contains complex molecules that assist in preventing cardiovascular events and high blood sugar.

While drinking coffee has many health benefits, as with everything, it's best to drink it in moderation. Keep your coffee consumption to a maximum of 3 to 5 cups. Drink filtered coffee to avoid the coffee's lipid-raising agents. Excessive intake of coffee can lead to side effects of caffeine, such as insomnia, increased heart rate, and digestive discomfort.

Coffee is a part of most Americans' day, so enjoy your morning cup of Joe.