



MARK WANZEL PHOTO

For Marty Schneider, owner of Marty's Coffee Bistro, offering fair trade organic coffee is simply the right thing to do for both his customers and for the farmers who grow the beans.

# Bistro owner serving up some social conscience

## Majority of people don't know what fair trade is

BY AMANDA FOURNIER

Unlike many of his multinational competitors, Marty Schneider, owner of Marty's Coffee Bistro, decided to serve up coffee with a social conscience by selling fair trade coffee to his customers.

Fair Trade Toronto defines "fair trade" as an economic strategy created for poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

It seeks greater equity in international trade and generates enhanced opportunities for producers in developing countries, who have been otherwise marginalized by the traditional capitalist model.

"I was reluctant, at first, because fair trade is more expensive and it would require me to educate the majority of my customers," Schneider

said. "I did a survey with consumers. Fifty per cent did not know what it (fair trade) was."

Schneider knew teaching everyday coffee drinkers about disparities in international trade would be challenging.

"It was a risk worth taking," he said. "Fair trade coffee is 25 to 30 per cent more expensive than non-fair trade products."

However, economic compensation differs drastically when comparing fair trade and non-fair trade farmers.

"Non-fair trade farmers get pennies from corporations and live in poverty," he said.

When Schneider continued to research fair trade opportunities, he learned of the socio-economic benefits it provided to disadvantaged communities and became involved.

"Fair trade goes beyond the purchase. It goes to build schools and wells for their communities," Schnei-

der said.

Fair trade sales provide an equitable market price to producers for their goods, children are not exploited for cheap labour, greener methods of production are used, and women's work is rewarded.

Schneider supports this organization because it gives producers the market tools to be self sufficient.

"It ensures the farmers get a proper wage for the work performed," he said.

Fair trade is a growing movement driven by globalization and developed in response to a multinational corporate monopoly. The Fair Trade Organization is a network that provides the "FTO mark" endorsing a product, as fair trade.

"Smaller farmers get together and form co-ops and get fair trade certified," Schneider said.

FAIR Page A3

# Fair trade products a step in the right direction: Johns

Continued from Page A1

The FTO mark certifies that social, economic, environmental and human rights standards are being met, and consequently provide grassroots businesses with the ability to compete in the global market.

According to Dr. Michael Johns, professor of international relations and comparative politics at Laurentian University at Georgian College, fair trade products are a step in the right direction.

"Some of the poorer areas in the world cannot compete — they are doomed to fail in the current market," Johns said. "This system is rigged against them. This (fair trade) allows producers to engage in the world market."

Ultimately, Western consumer culture can't address complicated political problems resulting from imbalanced market trades.

"We cannot resolve the world's inequities in terms of what we buy," Johns said, "when more than 50 per cent of the world earns \$2 a day or less. The idea is to spread out the wealth in underdeveloped areas and allowing producers to compete. This can allow them to create wealth in their own countries."

Technological aspects of globalization, mainly the Internet, have empowered consumers to make informed and savvy decisions.

"People have to research companies and choose what is important," Johns said. "Price is important, yet more people have a global perspective and realize there can be a social benefit to their choices."

For Schneider, who is taking an ethical approach to business, it is working, and his customers are grateful.

"Many people come in and thank

## More education about fair trade needed in Barrie: group's founder

BY RAYMOND BOWE

Members of the Barrie Fair Trade group come from all walks of life, says co-founder Bob Jowett, much like the people the organization is trying to help.

Fair trade is designed to give farmers and manufacturers in other countries a decent price for their goods and commodities.

The organization certifies such products, including everything from soccer balls to honey. The only certified products available in Barrie are coffee, tea, chocolate and sugar, but that's something the group wants to change.

Spreading the group's idea will help that list grow, Jowett says, and that means educating people.

"The group has open membership, so people are more than welcome to come along," he said, adding the Barrie group has about a dozen members. "It encompasses a wide range, really. It's not easy to categorize us."

Jowett emigrated from England to Canada in 2004 to provide his family, including two young daughters, a better life. But it was back home that he was first introduced to fair trade.

"My first real involvement was a mass lobby of parliament in the

UK about ... a trade situation," Jowett said. "There were more than 10,000 people, and it was the largest ever lobby of UK MPs. I learned an awful lot there."

Jowett said fair trade ideas are popular in his birth nation, and he wanted to help spread the word here. He began researching the Canadian presence and soon hooked up with Bruce Morton, who was travelling to Toronto for fair trade events.

"We got together and decided to concentrate on Barrie," said Jowett.

One of the group's objectives is to get Barrie certified as Canada's first fair trade city, but there are several obstacles to overcome.

City council must pass a resolution, and a certain number of local retailers must also be on board, including 14 cafes and 28 retailers for a city this size.

The group can be reached through its website at [www.fairtradebarrie.com](http://www.fairtradebarrie.com). Jowett can be reached at 792-4430, or by e-mail at [cr\\_jowett@rogers.com](mailto:cr_jowett@rogers.com).

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me," he said. "It's a very positive thing."

For more information, visit the Barrie Fair Trade Working Group at [www.fairtradebarrie.com](http://www.fairtradebarrie.com), or check out Fair Trade Toronto at [www.fairtradetoronto.com](http://www.fairtradetoronto.com).

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