Coffee Industry White Paper

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Chicory and Coffee – A History in Southern Beverage

Introduction

There is a story about how New Orleans began drinking coffee with chicory. It goes that during the Civil War the Union blockaded the port of New Orleans. And when coffee began running low people started adding chicory to their coffee to make it last longer. And while there is some truth to this it has the feeling of a folktale that is just scratching the surface of the long and interesting history of chicory. This paper will go over what chicory is, what are its purported effects on the human body, its history and voyage around the world, and finally what this means to a southern coffee roaster.

Definitions and Medical Effects

Chicory is described as a "somewhat woody, perennial, herbaceous plant" it has been said it looks similar to a strong vined flower. It is simply put, an edible plant. It has been consumed in a cultivated form or raw and there are two main species of it with *Cichorium Intybus* and *Cichorium Endivida however* this paper will be focusing on the Intybus species. Of the Intybus species there are dozens of types however the market tends to focus on three types for their specific parts; Radicchio, who's leaves called Endives are commonly used in salads, The Belgian Endive, who's white flowers are used in a milk sauce, and finally for the focus of this paper, *Cichorium Sativum*, whose roots can be cooked, ground up, and used as a drink or as a substitute for coffee. To clarify on two points before this paper gets too long. First, as mentioned earlier, even though many people are using the term Endive as just the name for the leaves of a chicory plant it is actually the name of the species of chicory. Second, even though three parts of the plant are specifically mentioned in this paper it should be said that basically the entire plant is edible in one form or the other as will be later mentioned with chicory flour. Chicory has several

health benefits and a few drawbacks but has been generally regarded as safe (GRAS) by the FDA, added to "food in the United States list in 2018". The main medical ingredient of the chicory plant is Inulin, which is considered extremely good for one's gut health. According to the Schmidt (2007) study its safety was confirmed as digestive aid, diuretic, and laxative, and this tends to be how it was used throughout history. One of the main modern uses of it is that chicory does not have caffeine in it and is used as an additive for coffee or could be drunk by itself which has been done for centuries. However, if consumed in high amounts of the concentrated variety the *sesquiterpen*e lactones have the potential to produce toxic effects. According to a study done by Schumacher et al (2011)chicory also has a blood thinning effect, however it is unclear what specific chemical in the paper is causing it. According to one paper by Dr. Duda et al three compounds within the plant, "lactucin and its derivatives lactucopicrin and 11B, 13 dihydrolactucin" were similar to Ibuprofen in its analgesic abilities. There are also some downsides to drinking chicory however, one is that people can develop an allergy to it and those with an allergy to ragweed and pollen are particularly vulnerable to it. While a source couldn't be found on these matters it has been said that pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers shouldn't drink chicory and that chicory may alter the way some medicine is metabolized in a similar way to grapefruit. Overall, chicory is healthy and only subject to caution if consumer is pregnant, breastfeeding, or going into surgery.

History

The history of chicory is extremely old and possibly begins in ancient Egypt, several sources when discussing chicory say it is first mentioned in the Ebers Papyrus which is a document going over the different types of herbal medicines to be used for different illnesses. It does not actually mention chicory, what people are probably referring to is either a passage for dealing with worms "Another remedy for eliminating parasitic worms in the abdomen lettuce(?): 1 (dose), wormwood: 1 (dose), plant puree: 1 (dose). To be mixed into a homogenous mass (And) eaten. Then he (patient) discharges any worms that are in his abdomen." (Ebers. Eb64). Or a similar passage in Eb 67. The first definitive source found during the research for this paper is Dioscorides's *De Materia Medica*, a medical herb compendium which identifies around 300 herbs and their medicinal uses, where both types of chicory are called "astringent, cooling, and good for the stomach" (Dioscorides p287).In Europe it appears to have been a common drink to

have in the morning due to its medicinal properties. It appears that chicory was part of a morning routine on its own and is even mentioned in the then popular book “Don Quixote” in 1605 when it is mentioned that “Pancho who with his stomach full and not of chicory water” (Saavedra p 66). In 1670 Henrietta of England, who was the duchess of Orleans and sister-in-law to King Louis the fourteenth of France, at the time was thought to have been poisoned through her morning cup of chicory water. It is coincidental to note that this was at around the same time as when the coffee plant that would be the ancestor of most of the coffee in the western hemisphere was given as a gift from the Dutch to the French king Louis the fourteenth, and when coffee was beginning to gain popularity as a drink in western Europe. From here in the 18th and 19th century coffee would be more popular. With major mentions of chicory being whenever there is a reaction to coffee becoming harder to find from when Fredrick the Great banned coffee in Prussia in 1777, to when in 1783 in the United States imposed a tax on “seven classes of consumed by the rich or in general use: liquors, sugars, teas, coffees, cocoa, molasses and pepper” (Ukers p400). Chicory as its own drink did seem to surge in use in Europe under Napoleon with his continental system, and with how quickly the hole for coffee was filled with chicory it seems that Europe had not only known about chicory but also had a taste for it. Specifically in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy. As well as the infrastructure to support it. Moving across the Atlantic to North America the first records of chicory are in 1785 when then governor of Massachusetts Mr. Bowdoin had it brought over, most likely in response to the previously mentioned tax. In New Orleans specifically the first mention of it is in an advertisement for chicory amongst other seeds in the Louisiana Advertiser on May 30th, 1820. It seems people tended to grow their own chicory however rather than have it shipped in like coffee, as seen in the Jean Pierre Requirand letters where he asked his parents for a variety of seeds, including chicory in 1831. This all brings us to around the Civil War story where it is believed that people just came up with the idea of adding chicory to their coffee to make it last longer. The Union blocked 95% of exports from the south during the civil war with a focus on 12 major ports most notably New Orleans and Mobile. This was the inflection point when people began adding chicory to their coffee to stretch it. as previously seen however there has been a long history of basically every group that ended up in Louisiana drinking chicory, from the French nobility drinking it around the time of the settling of the city, to the Germans being famous for enjoying their chicory and making up a fifth of the city’s population at the time of the

blockade. Even the idea of drinking the chicory with coffee came from the Dutch. By 1872 the United States was manufacturing around 4 million pounds of chicory per year. By the dawn of the 20th century chicory was firmly in the minds of New Orleanians in regard to coffee.

Voyage

Chicory is native to Europe and western Asia, it grows as a weed in Europe and when the French traveled across the world to expand their empire they took chicory with them, where it was commonly drunk in the colonies such as Louisiana, India, and Vietnam. Where chicory is still a common drink today.

Modern Uses

As previously mentioned, people in Louisiana have been drinking chicory and coffee for years. However there seems to be a mistaken attitude of embarrassment in regard to coffee. It was always considered too different compared to the tastes of the rest of the country to really be pushed in terms of marketing and was kept as a local product. However, in recent years chicory and chicory coffee has had more popularity in the wider United States, there is a company called Blue Bottle that sold chicory coffee that was very popular in the northeast. It is worth mentioning that even though chicory started off as an additive it is actually more expensive than coffee today due to its lower demand.

Conclusion

From all of these resources chicory was most likely a day-to-day medicinal drink that was so common that even the peasantry could have it as previously mentioned in Don Quixote, similarly to how Aspirin, Advil, and Tylenol work today. It has several health benefits for specifically for those that can no longer have coffee. Personally, chicory to me is one of those neat inconsistencies of the human condition, it is as old as ancient Egypt and yet no one knows where specifically it came from, it is an additive that is more expensive than the ingredient it is supposed to pad out. I can’t even tell you why my pops and I enjoy sitting down for a cup chicory coffee, but I can tell you that I enjoy having a cup of chicory coffee with my pops.

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