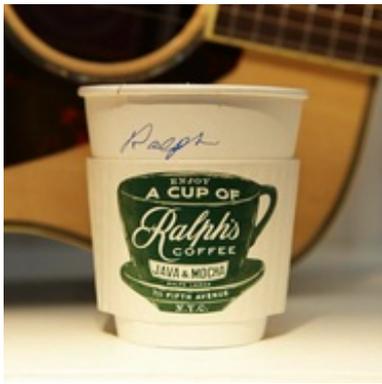


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Ralph Lauren's move into coffee may spur additional growth in edibles

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Mr. Lauren's cup of Ralph's Coffee

By JEN KING

U.S. fashion label Ralph Lauren has extended its lifestyle offerings beyond apparel, accessories and homewares to include a selection of finely roasted coffees.

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Luxury Daily

Numerous brands have tried their hands at edibles, oftentimes sticking to chocolates or small treats, to allow consumers to taste the brand's aesthetic. Given Ralph Lauren's success in categories outside of fashion, especially in the home furnishings sector, does the eponymous founder have the potential of becoming the next Paul Newman?

"Why should one of the most exclusive fashion brands should enter such a different and competitive industry?" said Benedetta Moreno, a London-based marketing consultant.

"The answer swings around two main concepts: customer satisfaction and lifestyle.

"Nowadays luxury is defined more about the experience you engage your clients with and less by the quality and exclusivity of the items you sell," she said. "The next generation of luxury shoppers will be more interested in an exceptional service and an outstanding brand experience rather than in a well-crafted product portfolio.

"For this reason, on the one hand, the idea to offer a branded coffee experience will have

good chances to help Ralph Lauren to positively surprise its customers and hopefully exceed their expectations. This is something I personally believe he already managed to achieve in Paris where on the 173 of Boulevard Saint Germain you can seat at the RL restaurant and experiment in a Yankees elegant setting a fine American food-break."

Ms. Moreno is not affiliated with Ralph Lauren, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Ralph Lauren was unable to respond directly.

A cup of Ralph

In 1983, Ralph Lauren launched its home collection and entered a space that many other luxury fashion brands had yet to venture into. Now, consumers can select a mug from Ralph Lauren's 30-year old home collection and pour a cup of branded coffee.

Similar to the late actor Paul Newman's eponymous Newman's Own line of foods and condiments, Ralph Lauren's coffee line may lead to more culinary developments. By creating an everyday product, hailed by many as a needed luxury, Ralph Lauren consumers may be more inclined to make repeat purchases.

Ralph Lauren introduced its coffee to enthusiasts on social media and has even created a dedicated Twitter account to track development and build awareness for the product as well as its branded coffee truck, a 1965 hunter green Citroën.



Ralph Lauren's coffee truck

Thus far on Twitter, Ralph Lauren has shared press clips regarding the launch, images of its coffee cups and the coffee truck's location in New York. Oftentimes, the coffee truck can be found outside Ralph Lauren's newly opened 38,000-square foot Ralph Lauren Polo flagship on Fifth Avenue.

Within the Ralph Lauren Polo flagship, the brand has also designed an in-store coffee shop on the second floor that serves Ralph Lauren brew and baked goods. Ralph's Coffee seats up to 22 guests at marble tables with antique bistro-style chairs and wooden benches.

Ralph's Coffee offers three signature blends – espresso, drip and decaf – as well as cold brew iced coffees and other variations to reflect the rise in artisanal coffee shops. Ralph Lauren worked with roaster La Colombe to roast and package its organic blends made from Central and South American and African coffee beans.



Ralph's Roast cans as seen on Ralph's Coffee's Twitter feed

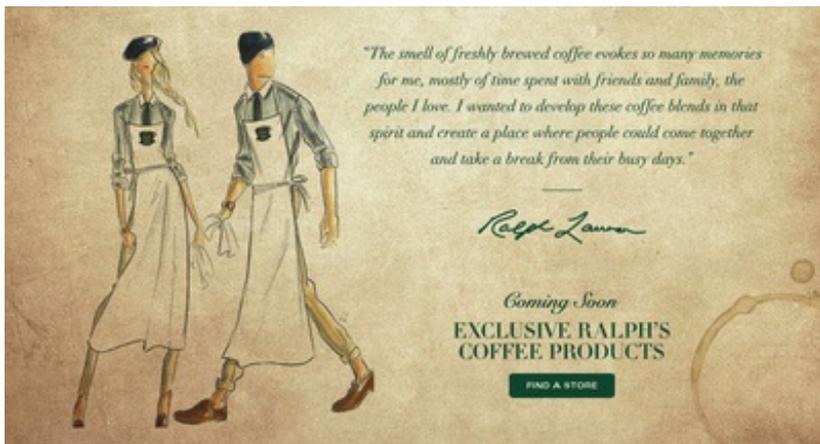
Treats such as pastries, sandwiches and yogurts are only available in the coffee shop, whereas the coffee truck only serves coffee by the cup. In addition to standard coffee shop treats, Ralph's Coffee will serve a brownie made using Mr. Lauren's mother-in-law's recipe.

As of press time, individual pounds of coffee are available for purchase within Ralph's Coffee in New York, but have yet to be sold on Ralph Lauren's ecommerce Web site.

On Ralph Lauren's homepage, under the "Home" section, Ralph's Coffee is promoted with a large image that shows consumers the Ralph Lauren Polo New York flagship, the coffee truck and a sketch of two baristas alongside a quote from Mr. Lauren regarding his inspiration for the project, in which he states, "The smell of freshly brewed coffee evokes so many memories for me, mostly of time spent with friends and family; the people I

love."

Here, the consumer also discovers that additional Ralph's Coffee products are coming soon with a store locator prompt.



Mr. Lauren's note of inspiration for starting Ralph's Coffee

In time, Ralph Lauren may also extend its coffee shop model to other flagship locations.

Treat you well

Ralph Lauren is not the first brand to try its hand at treating consumers to a tasty, branded treat. But, many of the brands that have produced edibles do so on a holiday-focused basis or to celebrate an anniversary.

Most recently, U.S. label Donna Karan celebrated its 30th anniversary with French Patisserie Ladurée with a box of macarons. The special pastries were available during New York Fashion Week and will be sold through the month of September ([see story](#)).

Commonly, brands team up with partners more associated with the culinary industry to create edible experiences for enthusiasts. These projects are often only for a limited-time and work to drive foot traffic for the partner, who is often a hotelier.

For example, British footwear and accessories label Jimmy Choo joined up with the Berkeley Hotel in London for the first time on a branded Pret-a-Portea dining experience.

During the afternoon tea, guests munched on cake and cookie versions of Jimmy Choo handbags and shoes, giving a different way to experience the brand's designs. For Jimmy Choo loyalists and diners generally interested in fashion, the whimsical treats created a memorable brand moment ([see story](#)).

Given coffee consumption in the United States, Ralph Lauren's move into coffee may not tarnish the brand's standing among affluent consumers.

"At first sight this could completely look normal, especially considering that the U.S. coffee and snack shops industry alone reported \$28.84 billion in 2012 and that the U.S. per capita coffee consumption amounts at 7.5lb," Ms. Moreno said. "A quantity that definitely touches its highest figures in a fast-moving busy city such as the Big Apple.

"Exploring the coffee industry will facilitate the iconic American fashion house to

become a luxury lifestyle brand and not only a fashion label; probably on the purpose of catching that wave that Armani incredibly well-surfed several years ago entering the hospitality and entertainment world," she said.

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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