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## McDonald's brews for stake in US espresso coffee market



AFP/File Photo: Fast food giant McDonald's said Monday it is brewing a plan to claim a share...

by Virginie Montet  
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WASHINGTON (AFP) - Fast food giant [McDonald's](#) said Monday it is brewing a plan to claim a share of the lucrative US espresso coffee market, currently dominated by Starbucks, the global leader in things latte and cappuccino.

"This isn't just about coffee. It's a new strategic approach to beverages," McDonald's spokesman Walt Riker said.

What began as a test-run in 800 McDonald's outlets is poised to be extended soon to nearly all 14,000 restaurants run by the fast food establishment in the United States.

Soon, in all the restaurants featuring the easily recognizable golden arches of McDonald's, customers will be able to order an espresso-machine coffee from a "barista," just as they would at Starbucks.

"The advantage we have is convenience: we have more convenient locations than any restaurant in America, and we have terrific value," said Riker.

In addition to milky lattes, robust macchiatos and frothy cappuccinos, McDonald's will offer hot tea, iced tea and bottled water -- just like Starbucks does.

But McDonald's customers will not be able to customize their cup of java as they can at Starbucks, where the client specifies size, type of milk, flavoring, sugar content, number of espresso shots, with or without whipped cream, foamy or milky, and more.

"Before, you had three kind of coffee: black, cream and sugar," said Robert Thompson, a professor of popular culture at [Syracuse University](#) in New York state.

"Then coffee became an entire menu with Starbucks," he added.

"McDonald's clearly isn't going to get into the same kind of specificity as Starbucks. It obviously is not going to become Starbucks, but it is competing with them," he said.

The Wall Street Journal called the new feature on the McDonald's menu the most important change at the fast-food chain in 30 years.

McDonald's, which opened its first restaurant in 1955 and now has "more than 30,000 restaurants serving 52 million people in more than 100 countries each day," is entering the highly competitive field of espresso coffees to meet increasing demand from its US clientele for specialty beverages, it said.

Its entry into the market comes as Starbucks, which began its crusade to convert Americans to good coffee in 1971, with one outlet in [Seattle](#), has begun to struggle to keep its dominant position in the world of espresso coffee purveyors.

Starbucks dominates the espresso-coffee market, with more than 14,000 outlets in 43 countries around the world.

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