

The Various Flavors of Coffee

by Anthony Capella



About the Book

From the internationally bestselling author of **The Wedding Officer** comes a novel whose stunning blend of exotic adventure and erotic passion will intoxicate every reader who tastes of its remarkable delights.

When a woman gives a man coffee, it is a way of showing her desire.

?Abyssinian proverb

It was a cup of coffee that changed Robert Wallis's life --- and a cup of very bad coffee at that. The impoverished poet is sitting in a London coffeehouse contemplating an uncertain future when he meets Samuel Pinker. The owner of Castle Coffee offers Wallace the very last thing a struggling young artiste in *fin de siècle* England could possibly want: a job.

But the job Wallis accepts --- employing his palate and talent for words to compose a ?vocabulary of coffee? based on its many subtle and elusive flavors --- is only the beginning of an extraordinary adventure in which Wallis will experience the dizzying heights of desire and the excruciating pain of loss. As Wallis finds himself falling hopelessly in love with his coworker, Pinker's spirited suffragette daughter Emily, both will discover that you cannot awaken one set of senses without affecting all the others.

Their love is tested when Wallis is dispatched on a journey to North Africa in search of the legendary Arab mocca. As he travels to coffee's fabled birthplace --- and learns the fiercely guarded secrets of the trade --- Wallis meets Fikre, the defiant, seductive slave of a powerful coffee merchant, who serves him in the traditional Abyssinian coffee ceremony. And when Fikre dares to slip Wallis a single coffee bean, the mysteries of coffee and forbidden passion intermingle?and combine to change history and fate.

Discussion Guide

1. What did you discover about *fin-de-siècle* England by reading **The Various Flavors of Coffee**? What makes this time and place ideal for love stories such as Robert and Emily's?
2. Discuss the significance of coffee as Samuel Pinker's chosen product. What makes Robert suited to the job of describing an addictive pleasure? What do Pinker's other marketing tactics achieve?
3. What sparks Emily and Robert's mutual attraction? What makes Emily different from the other women he has known?
4. Browse through the epigraphs that appear on the opening pages of various chapters and parts, and the quotation that opens the book. What sort of poetry do they form, echoing Robert's verse and enhancing the novel?
5. A frequent client of prostitutes, Robert becomes interested in the taboo subject of women's sexual pleasure. In what ways is he a very exceptional yet a very typical man for his generation? Why did society question whether it was possible for women to enjoy sex? Were you aware of the medical procedures once used to treat hysterics?
6. Fikre was literally enslaved, and Emily was symbolically enslaved. What do both characters demonstrate about women's history? How did obedience, virginity, and other factors determine their "value"?
7. How were Pinker's daughters affected by his parenting style? What distinctions did he make between daughters and sons?
8. Discuss Arthur's career in politics, and Emily's role in that life. Is their style of marriage completely outdated? Do similar marriages still exist in the contemporary world?
9. Compare Hector to Robert. What did Emily admire about both men? Was Hector's life driven more by fate or by his own choices?
10. At its core, is Fikre's story any different from the other "various flavors" of love in the novel? In what ways is Mulu a desirable man, perhaps even more desirable than any of the other male characters?
11. Ultimately, what was the reason Robert and Emily's story unfolded as it did? Were you surprised by the revelations in her letter, appearing in chapter eighty-seven?
12. What did you learn about Britain's suffragettes? What did Emily's hunger strike indicate about her true self? What similar social-justice movements exist today in your community?
13. Are there any traces of Frog left in the grown-up Philomena? How does Philomena honor her sister's legacy? In what ways are they very much alike?
14. What was the effect of the novel's structure, with shifts in the verb tense and shifts in the points of view? What does the voice of an older Robert Wallis convey as he recalls his life?

15. What does Africa represent to Robert? How does the landscape of foreign lands compare to that of England? How do the novel's varying settings create meaningful backdrops for the episodes in Robert's life?

16. Anthony Capella's previous novels also deal with sensual delights and international locales. How does this blend make his work unique?

Author Bio

Anthony Capella is an author, self-proclaimed Italophile, and lover of all things culinary. He lives in Oxfordshire with his wife and three children. His first novel, **The Food of Love**, was a Richard and Judy pick, and is being made into a film by DiNovi Pictures.

Critical Praise

"Robust?. Fast-paced ? propelled by Capella's masterful characterizations."

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