

# Capital Coffee – Two Children Coffee

## Stockbridge is often criticised for having more cafés than it can bear.

Two Children Coffee's instant success seems to have debunked this view. Though some debate remains over which side of the Stockbridge / Comely Bank 'border' it lies on, there's little doubt that it has already attracted a significant number of regulars since opening in mid April.

Have other cafés in the area been deprived of business? This isn't necessarily a zero-sum game. Cafés have spread more and more into our communities, as places to socialise, chill, study and work. In some cases, they are taking over the role played, historically, by pubs. It's highly likely that there remains further scope for café culture to spread and for the UK to 'continentalise' further.



Photo by Eva Vaporidi

Good espresso is not something that can be done consistently without a lot of effort. Many cafés in Edinburgh which have

expanded have found it difficult to maintain standards. In part, this is due to the shortage of (well-trained) baristas in the city, as evidenced by the numerous ads appearing in café windows seeking experienced staff. Brexit has also played a role, as many baristas working in Edinburgh were from the EU – especially Mediterranean countries. These are countries with a much longer tradition of good coffee. Coffee quality may have been diluted by Brexit.

A genuine coffee culture has only emerged over the last 15 years or so in the UK. As cafés have become ever more numerous, customers are becoming even more discerning. Specialty coffee has, in the last decade, entered the mainstream. The expansion of places such as Cairngorm, Fortitude and Artisan Roast attest to this. Specialty coffee is no longer the preserve of a clique. The cafés themselves have become less austere places, with more comfortable seating. Some of the snobbery over coffee has also eased, though a commitment to excellence has been retained. Places such as Modern Standard (Bruntsfield) and Mo Beans (Easter Road) have deliberately sought to ‘democratise’ specialty coffee. Two Children very much connects to these trends. It has attracted a wide range of customers, across generations, thanks to its welcoming atmosphere.

A nice feature of Two Children is the variety of seating options; booths, banquettes, larger tables, and more relaxed seating at the front. On warm days, the café is able to fully open the front section, allowing customers to sit inside but still enjoy the fresh air. The place is commendably spacious and airy, almost cavernous in character. Two Children rarely feels crowded even when very busy, as it often is. It matches the size and scale of the big chains, though has a much fresher feel. The décor is very sleek, with some distinctly Scottish touches (such as in the choices of dried flowers along the wall). Some of the furniture looks as if it is from Catalog interiors a couple of doors down.



Photo by Eva Vaporidi

The very busyness of Two Children reminded me of buzzing student haunts such as Kilimanjaro (Southside) and Union Brew Lab (next to Old College). Indeed, Two Children uses the same beans as Kilimanjaro, by specialty coffee pioneers Square Mile Roasters, based in East London. More specifically they are 'Red Brick' espresso, which has deep, lingering fruity notes with a sweet finish. Another parallel with Kilimanjaro are the individual booths at the back of the café. These are ideal for readers, laptoppers (and perhaps those on dates). These likenesses suggests the involvement of Edinburgh coffee pioneer, Jon Sharp.

Most importantly, the coffee is made with far greater care and attention than you usually get in the chains, where barista standards are inconsistent at best. The cortado I was served was balanced and smooth. Food wise, they offer a variety of typical brunch favourites; things which have been poached, scrambled and smashed. There's a definite focus on freshness and fruitiness, and they also offer a range of tempting smoothies. The roar of the smoothie maker added to the mid-afternoon hubbub.

Those who find Two Children to their liking will hope that it lasts much longer than chocolate specialists Ocelot whose elegant, minimalist café closed very suddenly last year,

leaving a gaping hole in this row of businesses. Two Children is already a popular destination in Comely Bank/ Stockbridge.

Two Children Coffee, 124b Raeburn Place, EH4 1HG.