

Capital Coffee – Beatnik

Beatnik is the most interesting recent arrival on the Edinburgh specialty coffee scene. In November 2022 this slightly mysterious new venture opened on Brougham Street in Tollcross.

This was in the location where the pioneering Machina Espresso had been based for several years, prior to their move to their expansive new premises on Marchmont Road. There was little evidence of what this new business was, with markings on the exterior and window very minimal; you have to visit in person to find out what was going on. Beatnik culture of the 1950s emphasised those artists and creatives who rejected some of the mores of conventional society. Beatnik is certainly something a little different.



Beatnik generally offers a house espresso, alongside with a regular guest bean. What is noticeable is the variety of coffee they use, from a number of different specialty roasters and indeed a variety of countries.

Largely spreading through word of mouth, Beatnik has quickly established itself as one of the leading places for top notch espresso (as well as batch brew etc) in the capital. In contrast to some of the slightly cramped coffee houses you find, Beatnik has a very open feel emphasised by the high ceilings, and well spaced seating. The interior shows flair and imagination.

The idea behind Beatnik is, according to one of the co-managers Jemma, to 'revive the social aspect' of coffee houses. It's become very common for coffee spots to be dominated by lap toppers, using them as work and study spaces. Such places echo to the sound of clicking and clacking throughout the day. In contrast, Beatnik is a laptop free zone – and not just at busy times. The idea is to create a place where people can escape screens and notifications for a while, or to gather and engage in meaningful discussion.

The energy is warm and welcoming and Beatnik often seems lively. Trying to visit one Friday morning, I found the place swarming with people, with a social event taking place. Even at quieter times there is a definite energy to the place. The baristas at Beatnik have a nice balance of friendliness alongside clear seriousness and focus as regards the coffee. The baristas are keen to let customers know about the coffee they are serving but do so in clear language, avoiding battering customers over the head with jargon.



Beatnik have a number of suppliers from around Europe, all interested in experimentation and new ideas. This provides great variety in flavour profiles.

Crucially though, when it comes to extracting the best from these beans, their baristas have the requisite skills. What they produce is consistently excellent and is right up there with another leading coffee spot [Source](#), only five or so minutes walk away on Spittal Street. Both places are really raising the bar in terms of what is now available in the city. This will hopefully lead to further improvements and lead to the sort of consistent high quality that customers deserve if

they are spending over three quid on their coffees.

A lot of their business is take-away, with the green swathe of the Meadows in very close proximity. Beatnik also has a desire to help engender more of a late afternoon and evening coffee scene. At present, most places close around four, frustrating many. Beatnik is experimenting with opening later on Fridays and hopes, in the future, to extend opening times more widely. In just a short period of time, Beatnik has built up a loyal band of fans who have embraced the different flavour this lively place has brought to the coffee scene. Beatnik manifests an evolving and increasingly rich coffee scene in the city.

