

The talking point

Stop questioning my drinks choices!

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Are you fed up of people querying your food and drink choices? Let us know at info@deliciousmagazine.co.uk



Some days Claire Nelson likes her coffee without caffeine, her cocktail without booze or her fizzy drink without sugar. Why, she asks, do people have such a problem with that?

I'm a longstanding member of that much-maligned club: decaf coffee drinkers. I have my reasons. Let's remember that caffeine is a psychoactive drug and can boost cortisol levels. I find its effects similar to anxiety: racing heart, jitters... Even the alertness bothers me (some days I can do without a heightened awareness of everything, thankyouverymuch).

The taste and ritual of coffee get me out of bed, but whether I want it with a dose of the frenzies depends on the day. And, thanks to decaf, I have a choice. Shame there's often someone who needs to inform me: "You DO know decaf still has caffeine in it?" Yes I do, thank you, and I also know it's nowhere near enough to send my heart bursting through my chest like something from *Alien*.

So I despair of coffee shops that smugly proclaim, "We don't do decaf." (And if they have one of those tacky signs that says 'Death Before Decaf', I'm OUTTA there.) If

baristas asked "Do you want the coffee with or without the psychoactive substance today?" would there be less derision? It's a strange insistence that to drink coffee one has to be rigged up on caffeine. We don't expect everyone who has a social glass to get blotto.

Or do we? Ordering a non-alcoholic drink at a bar

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invites its own interrogation under the guise of concern. Are you pregnant? Unwell? C'mon, don't you deserve to let loose? Which all translates as: why are you making me feel bad about my booze?

The consideration put into non-alcoholic options is an attitude barometer. I've been to so many bars that offer a catalogue of mad-scientist cocktails, while the booze-free option is a lime and soda with a sprig of mint. (And don't get me started on pubs...) Those of us who don't want something alcoholic also don't want to feel like an eight-year-old at the

grown-ups table, sipping lemonade with a straw. This reeks of the notion that if you prefer a soft drink, you're soft, and you don't deserve nice things. Go sit in the corner with the decaf drinkers, young lady.

Not that your choice of soft drink is immune to scrutiny. Opting for a sugar-free soda can still conjure questions. I find sugary soft drinks far too sweet, so I like the taste of Diet Coke. But curse the marketeers who named it, because it means forever being can-splained to by someone assuming it's a lifestyle choice. "You DO know Diet Coke is just as bad for you as regular Coke?" What, do they think I'm not aware I'm drinking what seems to me to be little more than fizzy chemicals? That I've mistaken aspartame to be a kind of fruit?

Please, stop the unsolicited chemistry lessons and loaded concern. You DO know people are aware of what they want to drink, and that's why they've ordered it, right? Let's agree to each cup their own. ☘

