

Article URL: <http://starbulletin.com/2008/01/31/business/engle.html>
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Vol. 13, Issue 31 - Thursday, January 31, 2008



The Buzz

Erika Engle

To Andrew Hetzel, it *does* amount to a hill of beans

Andrew Hetzel of the Big Island is Hawaii's first certified coffee cupping judge and instructor, after passing exacting testing by the Specialty Coffee Association of America this month.

Certified cuppers can grade coffee "from its green state on through the finished cup," said Ric Rhinehart, executive director of the SCAA.

"It is a significant accomplishment, so kudos to him," he said.

Hetzel is one of only 250 SCAA-certified cuppers in the world. He will seek Q Grading certification from the Coffee Quality Institute in March. Its standards are identical, but testing includes an additional 100-question exam.

As the owner of Kamuela-based coffee consultancy **Cafemakers LLC**, the certification gives Hetzel and his business extra credibility, but it is concern for the future of the Kona coffee industry that caused him to seek the credentials, he said.

"My intent is really to get the word out about the situation more than to promote my own business." He is not adding clients to his already-full roster, he said.

He sees parallels between the Kona coffee industry and the American automotive industry.

Kona coffee's golden era was from the 1940s to the 1960s, he said.

"I think that in Hawaii there's been a reliance on the old-origin name to denote that the coffee tastes good. So it's kind of like the Cadillac of the 1940s and 50s -- but you know what? I drive a Honda."