

# The Book of Secrets

Publisher Sebastiano Vottari

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# GENERAL SUMMARY OF THE 13 CHAPTERS

1. **The Coffee** (*between barroom myths, awakening chemistry, and historical curiosities*)
2. **The Cigarette** (*between history, hidden chemistry and publicity twists*)
3. **Artificial Intelligence** (*between digital hallucinations, lucky mistakes and black boxes*)
4. **The Ethiopian Bible** (*among fallen angels, lost books and guardians of the Ark*)
5. **The Quran** (*among undeciphered codes, mathematical symmetries and Venetian treasures*)
6. **Coca-Cola** (*between Soviet espionage, design errors and armored formulas*)
7. **Amazon** (*between calculated chaos, secret departments and crazy corporate rules*)
8. **WhatsApp** (*between billion-dollar paybacks, invisible codes and 007 tricks*)
9. **Chocolate** (*between Aztec forgers, secret bombs and crystal alchemy*)
10. **Tea** (*between undercover thefts, trade wars and Zen chemistry*)
11. **The Water** (*between paradoxes of physics, underground oceans and illusions of the senses*)
12. **The Cats** (*between biological superpowers, spy cats, and liquid physics*)
13. **Bergamot** (*between geographical mysteries, imperial perfumes and heart-saving molecules*)

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# The Coffee

Here are 10 coffee secrets that will probably surprise you:

## 1. They are not real "grains", but fruit stones

What we call coffee beans are actually not legumes or cereals, but seeds (pits) of a fruit very similar to a cherry, called a drupe.

coffee plant produces these sweet red berries; the pulp is almost

always discarded (or used to make an infusion called cascara), while the seed

inside is dried and toasted.

## 2. Espresso has less caffeine than Moka (and American coffee)

We are used to thinking of the espresso from the bar as an energy "bomb" for

because of its intense flavor. In reality, caffeine is water-soluble: longer

The more water remains in contact with the coffee powder, the more caffeine it extracts.

espresso is extracted in about 25 seconds (containing about 60-80 mg of

caffeine), while a cup of Moka or American filter coffee requires several

minutes, containing up to double the caffeine!

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### **3. Waking up right after is the worst time to drink it**

Drinking coffee as soon as you get out of bed is not the most effective choice. When you wake up, our body naturally produces a spike in cortisol (the hormone of stress that helps us wake up). Taking caffeine at that time reduces its effectiveness and increases addiction. The secret? Wait about an hour or an hour and a half after waking up (around 9:30-10:30 for those who wake up at 8:00 a.m.), when cortisol begins to drop.

### **4. The secret of the "Coffee Nap"**

It may seem counterintuitive, but drinking a coffee and immediately going to sleep for 15-20 minutes is a good idea.

minutes is the scientifically most effective way to recharge. Caffeine

It takes about 20 minutes to enter the bloodstream and reach the brain.

Meanwhile, the short sleep clears the brain's receptors of adenosine (the tiredness molecule). When you wake up after 20 minutes, caffeine

It will go into action by finding free receptors, giving you an energy boost unbeatable.

### **5. The first webcam in history was born out of... laziness and coffee**

In 1991, at Cambridge University, there was only one coffee machine for

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the entire computer science department, located in the so-called Trojan Room.

Tired of climbing flights of stairs only to find the carafe empty, some researchers installed a camera pointed at the coffee maker that transmitted a black and white image to office computers. In 1993 it was connected to the Internet, becoming the world's first webcam.

## **6. The false myth of the Moka pot "that never gets washed"**

Grandma's tradition says that the Moka should only be rinsed quickly for to avoid losing the aroma and to maintain the coffee's "patina." The master coffee makers However, they reveal the opposite: coffee contains oils which, in contact with air, They go rancid. That dark patina gives a burnt, bitter taste to the subsequent coffees. The secret is to wash it well with hot water and a sponge (always without soap!) after each use, removing residual oils from the filter and from the gasket.

## **7. The most expensive coffee in the world is... digested**

Kopi Luwak, produced mainly in Indonesia, is one of the rarest and most expensive on the planet (it can cost more than 1,000 euros per kilo). Its secret? It comes

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produced from coffee berries eaten, partially digested and then defecated from the palm civet, a small mammal. Digestive enzymes of the animal ferment the grains eliminating the bitterness and giving a taste unique and chocolatey. (There is an even more expensive variant made with elephants in Thailand, the Black Ivory).

## **8. The darker it is, the less caffeine it has**

A dark roast coffee has a stronger, full-bodied and bitter flavour than a light roast. Many think it is also higher in caffeine, but it is the opposite is true (or almost): the prolonged roasting process at high temperatures temperatures tend to burn a small part of the caffeine and inflates the bean. With the same measuring cup, a light roast (more acidic and fruity) will give you will give a slightly bigger shock.

## **9. Decaf isn't really caffeine-free.**

If you order a "deca" thinking you'll get zero caffeine, know that this is not the case. decaffeination process fails to remove 100% of the substance. For law (in Europe), a coffee can be defined as decaffeinated if the content of caffeine does not exceed 0.1% on the roasted bean. In practice, a cup of Decaffeinated coffee still contains 2 to 5 milligrams of caffeine (compared to 60-80 of a normal espresso).

## 10. It was the "devil's drink" until a Pope baptized it

When coffee arrived in Italy from the Arab world (around the end of the 16th century), many ecclesiastics asked Pope Clement VIII to ban it, calling it the "drink

of Satan" used by infidels. The Pope wanted to taste it before deciding.

After taking a sip, he was so ecstatic that he exclaimed: "This

Satan's drink is so delicious that it would be a shame to let it be used

exclusively to the infidels. Let us deceive Satan by baptizing her! From that moment on

Coffee spread freely throughout Europe.

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# The Cigarette

Here are 10 secrets about cigarettes (including history, hidden chemistry, and publicity stunts) that will almost certainly surprise you:

## 1. **Marlboros were born as "women's only" cigarettes (with the red anti-lipstick filter!)**

Everyone associates Marlboro with the legendary lone cowboy (Marlboro Man), the quintessential symbol of the "tough and pure male." The secret? When Philip Morris launched Marlboro in 1924, they were luxury cigarettes designed exclusively for women, advertised in fashion magazines with the slogan "Mild as May" ("Sweet as the month of May"). In the 1930s and 1940s they had even a red band printed around the filter called "Beauty Tip" (Beauty tip) that was used to hide lipstick stains! Only in 1954, when the first cancer studies came out and men began to want filtered cigarettes (which at the time were considered "for ladies"), the advertiser Leo Burnett had the idea of using cowboys to convince men that smoking a filtered cigarette did not affect their manhood.

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