

TASTE BUDS

COLUMN BY ANDREW McELHANY AND RAY SANDEFUR

# Dad Tired



photo by Matt Cornelius



photo by Matt Cornelius



## ALLEY CATS COFFEE BAR

**Andrew**

I love how downtown Texarkana has grown and emerged as a now vibrant part of our city. In the last several years, the area has really blossomed. One of the neat additions is Alley Cats Coffee Bar. Alley Cats is operated out of a 1940s era train car positioned next to the train tracks. There is plenty of patio seating to enjoy the sights and sounds of all the downtown activity, as well as seating inside. We took the entire family one Saturday morning and had a great experience! The coffee was delicious and our toddler enjoyed watching the trains cruise by just outside the window.

Typically, at the peak of my “Dad Tired” status, my go-to order is a cup of strong black coffee. However, when trying a new place, I like to go with something that jumps off the page. In this case, I went with the Chocolate Covered Strawberry Latte, and it was fantastic! This sweet treat espresso featured a smooth vanilla iced coffee with a frozen Nutella base around the cup, topped with creamy strawberry cold foam, a beautiful milk chocolate drizzle and fresh strawberries around the rim. They also feature a fall seasonal menu and even offer some fun options for kids including being able to put a little marshmallow ghost on any iced drink! If you are looking for a new coffee spot, or just a new place to check out, Alley Cats Coffee Bar in downtown Texarkana is a must!

For most coffee enthusiasts, a cup of coffee is an essential part of the daily routine. But for parents, it’s often a necessity. As someone who has experienced the “dad tired” phenomenon for nearly three years, I can attest to the vital role morning coffee plays in my day. Yet, I must acknowledge that “dad tired” pales in comparison to the relentless energy demands faced by my wife, Shelby, an absolute rockstar of a mom. She juggles our two boys with grace, and her coffee game is nothing short of elite—much more essential than any little pick-me-up I might need.

My co-author, Ray, shares a similar story. While he may not have been a stranger to coffee, he was certainly new to the coffee shop experience. In his earlier career, he relied on a single-brew Keurig that kept him caffeinated through the workday. Now, as a husband and father of three, his coffee habits have evolved. With a job, a busy household, and a trusty Mr. Coffee pot, Ray appreciates the comfort and energy that coffee provides. However, both of us realized it was time to step outside our comfort zones and explore the local coffee scene in Texarkana.

Together, we ventured to discover the hidden gems of our community, each offering unique brews that promise the perfect morning pick-me-up. Join us as we explore these local hot spots, celebrating the art of coffee and the vibrant culture surrounding it.



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## 7 BREW DRIVE THRU COFFEE

Ray

7 Brew is located on Richmond Road in the parking lot with Super One, Jason's Deli, and Wingstop. This is an area I might typically try to avoid due to "traffic." (It's easy to get to, but you might have to sit and wait at a red light for one cycle, which I consider traffic for a small town!) However, 7 Brew has a double drive-thru that cuts down on the wait time and the coffee makes it all worth it. I think they are the Chick-fil-A of the coffee spots, always busy, always friendly, always quick, and always good.

I have been dabbling in their iced drinks. The Smooth 7 has been my latest order. It's an Irish cream and white chocolate breve. (I had to Google "breve") The Smooth 7 hits the spot. Being a cold drink, it is a refreshing way to start the morning. I picked it up after dropping one of the kids off for school. I think a quick drink after school drop-off might accidentally become a regular thing. 7 Brew has a wide variety of hot and cold coffee drinks, smoothies, shakes, teas, and lemonades. They have something for everyone. Did you know they even have a secret menu? I have hardly ventured from my black coffee, though, so for now I will stick to the regular menu.



photos by Matt Cornelius

## LOCAL HABIT COFFEE CO.

Andrew

Much like the downtown area of Texarkana, Nash, Texas, has also seen substantial growth in recent years. One of the newer establishments, right off Highway 82 (New Boston Road) near the Kings Highway intersection, is Local Habit Coffee Co. Located in the heart of Nash, Local Habit offers a variety of coffeehouse items and some tasty sweet and savory treats. Operating out of what I would call an old farmhouse, the ambiance feels very subtle despite being steps away from a busy thoroughfare. The cozy environment features areas for setting up your personal workspace for work or studying, as well as several couches and tables for enjoying coffee with friends. You can also enjoy your coffee outside on their wrap-around porch or in the beautiful courtyard. I have indulged in many delicious items that they offer, but a few that stand out are the Peaches and Crème Muffin, the Tres Leches Latte, and the refreshing Lavender Lemonade. I'm not sure what magic was used, but somehow, they have figured out a way to bake a muffin with a smooth, creamy center that includes light, fluffy peaches surrounding the perfect amount of crème.

Now, I will admit, I am not the most profound latte, cappuccino, or espresso connoisseur, but if you have ever enjoyed tres leches cake with a cup of coffee for dessert, then you're bound to enjoy the Tres Leches Latte from Local Habit. It's the best of both worlds all in one! I am a coffee drinker who has a pretty firm timetable on my intake of caffeine. I rarely indulge after lunchtime, so when we gathered at Local Habit later one afternoon, I opted for the Lavender Lemonade. It was the perfect caffeine-free option. My wife also loves their Lavender Honey Iced Latte, which she swears is the "perfect morning pick-me-up after a sleepless night," and she also hasn't stopped talking about their homemade chocolate chip cookies.

Ray

Local Habit has a very relaxing atmosphere with an awesome outdoor area to enjoy. The inside has a cozy cottage feel—even has a couple of board games. As the only third wave coffee shop in our area, it is a great place to grab some unique and high-quality coffee, a bite from their bakery, or one of their breakfast tacos (made from scratch). As cooler weather creeps in, so do the fancy lattes—Pumpkin Spice, Smoked Maple Bourbon, and Blueberry Cobbler. My kids enjoy the lemonade when we go, and I sneak sips when possible.





Now, we are not saying we've covered every great spot in Texarkana, but these places definitely hit the mark for us. Of course, if you are looking to keep your coffee game fresh, there are plenty more options around town. So, next time you are in the mood to try something new, check out other recommendations from Nichole Holze, local content creator and founder of the Ark-La-Tex Adventure Club ([arklatexadventures.com](http://arklatexadventures.com)). Who knows? You might just find your next favorite brew—or at least a new spot to escape “dad tired” mode for a few minutes.

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photo courtesy of Humble Troll



## HUMBLE TROLL COFFEE ROASTER

Humble Troll is a coffee brand crafted by a local roaster and operated as a nonprofit by Mission Texarkana. Launched in 2023, Humble Troll doesn't have a permanent location but features a coffee food truck that makes appearances around town.

They are also often seen as vendors at various local events. When you buy Humble Troll Coffee, you're giving Texarkana's homeless community the ability to earn money, gain work experience, and feel a sense of empowerment and belonging. “Buy a bag. Help a human.” To keep up with their latest locations, follow them on Instagram and Facebook. For those who want to enjoy their coffee at home, Humble Troll coffee beans are available for purchase anytime through their website [humbletrollcoffee.com](http://humbletrollcoffee.com).

## JOE MUGGS COFFEE

Located inside Books-A-Million, Joe Muggs Coffee was one of the first coffee spots to establish itself in Texarkana. Nestled among the bookstore's shelves, it quickly became a cozy retreat for book lovers seeking the ideal blend of coffee and literature. Offering a variety of freshly brewed coffee, espresso drinks, and treats, Joe Muggs creates an inviting atmosphere for those looking to enjoy a warm cup while exploring their next great read. Whether stopping in for a quick pick-me-up or settling in with a book, Joe Muggs Coffee has remained a part of Texarkana's coffee scene since its early days.



## KELLER COFFEE CO.

Keller Coffee is located at 3809 East 9th Street in Texarkana, Arkansas. Originally established in nearby Ashdown, they have now expanded to serve the Texarkana community.

If their Ashdown location is any indication, this spot is bound to be a hit. Keller Coffee serves Onyx coffee in various forms, including drip, espresso, and blended drinks. They offer various food options, from breakfast to pizza to appetizers and tacos. Whether you swing through the drive-thru or choose to stay a while, Keller Coffee Co. is sure to hit the spot.

photo courtesy of Keller Coffee Co.



## ROOSTERS COFFEE COMPANY

Roosters Coffee Company is located on the southwest edge of Texarkana, Texas, just off Highway 59 as you head west out of town. This charming drive-through coffee shop is housed in a bright yellow building that is hard to miss. While it operates solely as a drive-through with two windows designed to accommodate a line of cars around the building, it boasts a large menu. Roosters serves espresso drinks, drip coffee, and a wide variety of blended beverages, including smoothies. For food, they offer a selection of baked goods and bagels. Additionally, their menu features a rotating selection of seasonal drinks.

photo courtesy of Roosters Coffee Company



## SCOOTER'S COFFEE

The first Scooter's Coffee location was originally called "Scooter's Java Express." The name "Scooter's" was chosen after considering a list of options, as it perfectly aligned with the mission of keeping customers happy by allowing them to "scoot in and scoot out" quickly. Today, Scooter's Coffee is known for roasting only the top 10% of specialty coffee beans worldwide, ensuring a high-quality coffee experience with every cup.



## THE RABBIT HOLE

The Rabbit Hole is another top coffee shop in downtown Texarkana, conveniently located next to one of the city's most iconic spots, Courthouse Square. This charming shop serves as more than just a place for coffee. It's a mission-minded community gathering place. The Rabbit Hole boasts a large food menu, offering everything from sandwiches to hearty comfort food classics, with plenty of seating available for guests. In addition to their drip coffee and espresso drinks, they feature a variety of fun, non-coffee options, including a wide selection of specialty soda drinks.



photo courtesy of Nichole Holze

## STARBUCKS

With three convenient locations right off I-30, Starbucks has been a Texarkana staple since the opening of its first location. Known for its consistent quality, the coffeehouse offers an extensive menu for every taste—from classic lattes and cold brews to seasonal favorites and inventive Frappuccinos.

Friendly baristas and customizable drinks make it the perfect spot for a quick coffee run or a relaxed visit. Whether you are a fan of their signature blends or exploring new flavors, Starbucks brings a comforting touch to Texarkana's vibrant coffee scene.



## THE STAINED PAGE



photo courtesy of Nichole Holze

The Stained Page is a new coffee shop in downtown Texarkana that opened in January 2024. Located on Main Street in Texarkana, Texas, it has quickly become one of the best coffee spots in town, thanks to its unique and perfect blend of coffee and used books. The shop offers an extensive menu of coffee options, including both drip and espresso drinks, as well as a rotating selection of seasonal beverages. In addition to their drink offerings, The Stained Page serves a wide variety of homemade baked goods, including gluten-free and dairy-free options—making it one of the few coffee shops in the area to cater to those dietary needs. The shop also extends its hours on Saturdays to coincide with events at the Perot Theater, Silvermoon Theater, and other downtown happenings. ①

## TASTE AND SEE

Since 2009, Taste and See has been one of Texarkana's premier coffee shops and has become a beloved community staple. Taste and See offers its own line of coffee with an array of delicious flavors, especially popular during the fall season. In addition to their coffee beans, they also serve drip coffee, espresso drinks, and blended beverages. However, Taste and See is much more than just coffee—it's perhaps best known for its delightful chocolates, treats, and gelato. It's a go-to shop for gift-basket goodies, especially during the holiday season.



photo courtesy of Nichole Holze



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