

UC Davis establishes center to study coffee

By Edward Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

UC Davis has made a name for itself researching beverages people use to relax – like wine and beer. Now it's turning its attention to one Americans use to get wired: coffee.

On March 11, a roster of eight UC Davis scientists will come together for a research conference run by the school's recently founded Coffee Center. At the conference, the scientists and coffee industry stakeholders will gather to plumb such diverse topics as the genetics of coffee and the sensory perception of coffee drinkers.

It's the first step in an effort that some on campus see as leading to a dedicated coffee research study center akin to the Robert Mondavi Institute for Wine and Food Science, said J. Bruce German, director of the Foods for Health Institute at UC Davis. He also suggested the school could eventually offer a major in coffee science.

Coffee is certainly a powerhouse commodity. It is the largest food import in the U.S., and the world's most widely traded tropical agricultural commodity, according to the International Coffee Association. Worldwide coffee production is growing along with coffee consumption. In 2012-13, production is expected to hit a record 148 million bags.

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