

THE COFFEE STIR, a Sharpsville original, was enjoyed by young and old alike for generations at the corner drugstore's soda fountain. Now it is not quite so readily available, but is always a welcomed treat, especially among homecoming Sharpsville expatriates.

What is the coffee stir? A fountain drink consisting of coffee syrup, vanilla ice cream, and soda water. Unlike an ice cream soda, the concoction is blended like a milkshake. Unlike a milkshake, soda water replaces milk as a liquid. As any in town will tell you, it is uniquely refreshing.

The coffee stir originated in the drugstore of Frederick K. "Skip" Reichard. Skip opened the store about 1915 at the Southeast corner of Mercer Avenue and Shenango Street in the former Odd Fellows Temple there. We do not know exactly when a soda fountain was installed or when the drink was first concocted, but it is thought by the mid-20s. Many associate the coffee stir with the drugstore's longtime "soda jerk", Tommy Guyton.

With sackfuls of sugar and coffee piled on the pharmacy's wooden floors, Skip's wife, Alice Gertrude Knapp Reichard would use a great glass funnel to drip strong coffee upon white cane sugar, creating her coffee-flavored syrup. She would later make the syrup in her home.

After Skip's death in 1939, Gert operated the drugstore until she sold it to Graaf Oberrender "Obie" Cricks in 1952. She continued to make the syrup until her death in 1953.

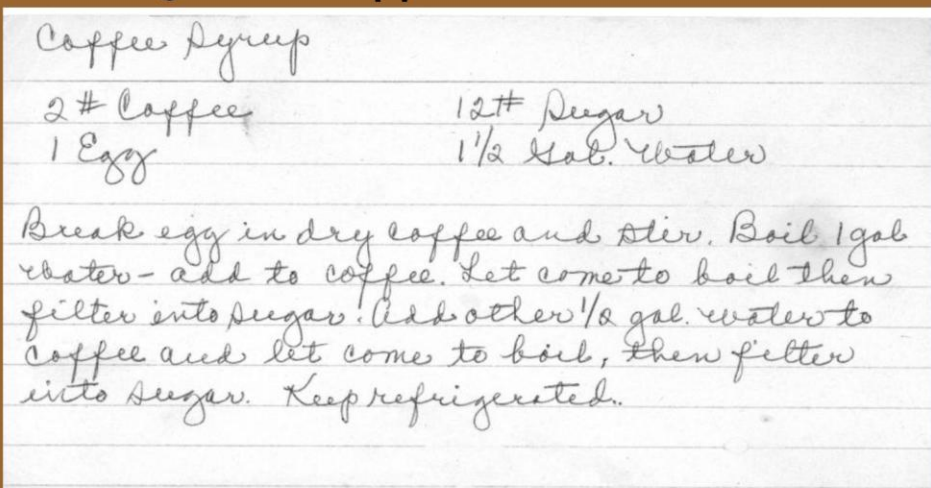
Few in Sharpsville escaped the coffee stir's beckoning. Blacksmith Pat Joyce drank three stirs a day. In fact, Pat was so fond of them that he was anxious about not having the drink on his upcoming trip to Ireland, so Obie sent him off to the Emerald Isle with a bottle of coffee syrup. All he'd need to rustle up over there were ice cream and soda water.

Cricks' pharmacy, in a new building which replaced the old Odd Fellow's Temple in 1960 – but still at the same corner of Mercer and Shenango Streets – was modern and bright. The fountain's oak and twisted iron seating also featured a miniature table and chairs, a treat for the kids.

While the local area identifies the drink with Sharpsville, is it unique to here? Our best evidence leads to that conclusion. A manual for soda fountain operators, *The Dispensers' Formulary* (4th edition, 1925), lists recipes for over 2,200 fountain drinks. None is remotely similar to the coffee stir.

How do you make the coffee stir? Blend 2 tbsp. of coffee syrup with 2 or 3 scoops vanilla ice cream in a blender. Add some club soda and blend.

Here is the true recipe for the syrup, handed down through the Knapp descendants:



Coffee Syrup

2# Coffee	12# Sugar
1 Egg	1 1/2 Gal. Water

Break egg in dry coffee and stir. Boil 1 gal. water - add to coffee. Let come to boil then filter into sugar. Add other 1/2 gal. water to coffee and let come to boil, then filter into sugar. Keep refrigerated.

If you are not quite so ambitious to make the genuine syrup for a true coffee stir, here is a simpler method with instant coffee:

Mix 1 1/2 cups water with 2 1/2 cups sugar in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, then cool. Mix 1 cup Instant Coffee with enough water to make a paste; combine it with the sugar syrup and store in a cool area.