



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Jidda, Saudi Arabia

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Dear Bud:

This handcrafted brass coffee pot was made in Mecca. Arabian coffee (gahwa) is a symbol of hospitality in Saudi Arabia. It is served almost routinely to guests on both business and social occasions.

The coffee is freshly brewed from green coffee beans to which is added a liberal amount of cardamom and sometimes a hint of ginger and other spices. The result is a light, somewhat bitter brew. Usually some fibers are placed in the pouring spout of the pot so that the spices will not drain into the cup.

It is sometimes difficult for strangers to cease drinking the coffee as it is served continuously in small cups (usually without handles) until a proper sign is given that no more is desired. This sign is made by shaking the cup side to side or by placing a finger over its mouth. Otherwise Arab hospitality dictates that the cup be kept full.

Americans especially have to cultivate a taste for the coffee. I now laughingly call it my "Saudi martini" and always have two! Most of my Saudi friends enjoy this joking reference to this beverage being the best substitute for anything stronger in this Muslim world.


John C. West
Ambassador