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## Caffeine high Glarus

### Preface

A revived firm in the Swiss Alps blends cutting-edge technology with hand-built ideals in pursuit of the perfect espresso.

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In a fast-paced age where noisy appliances squeeze your coffee out of foil capsules into polystyrene cups, watching Christian Sagehorn hand-press a silky espresso from an Olympia Cremina machine is a comforting sight.

“The design of the Cremina has remained pretty much the same for over 30 years,” says Sagehorn in the company’s showroom in Glarus, an Alpine town in eastern Switzerland. Waiting for the last drops of coffee to fall into his cup, he inspects the brew and continues, “It’s a machine for people who love timeless design and pure, long-lasting materials.” He takes a sip and nods his approval.

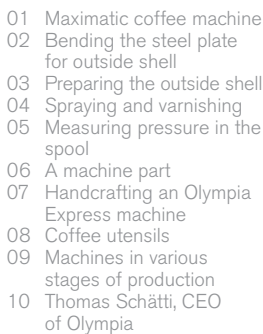
The managing director prepares a second espresso for Thomas Schätti, Olympia’s CEO since his family’s firm, Schätti AG Metallwarenfabrik, bought the company in 2011. “We’d been making parts for Olympia for a few years before we were invited to take over and make the complete machine,” says Schätti. “It was a welcome opportunity; to produce a quality product you must be deeply involved with it. We didn’t want to build a machine to last three or four years but one that lasts three or four generations.”



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## The process

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### Cutting

Metal sheets and rods are laser-cut to shape by a TruMatic 6000.

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### Folding and welding

Workers fold and weld the pieces together to create the machine’s shell.

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### Treatment

The surfaces are cleaned and coated with quick-drying epoxy paint before they are baked at a high temperature.

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### Assembly and testing

More than 300 pieces are collected and assembled. The machines are tested for temperature and pressure.



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Schätti’s production facility, a short drive from the showroom, is the breeding ground for both the Cremina and its semi-automatic little brother, the tiny Maximatic, the world’s smallest dual-heating system espresso machine. “These machines not only make good coffee, they’re also nice to look at,” says Schätti as he guides MONOCLE through the factory’s corridors and into a depot stacked with metal sheets. “It might be difficult to see now but this is only the first step of the process,” he says. Between 1mm and 2mm thick, the material in the room lies waiting for one of the workers to feed it to a TruMatic 6000, a robot that glides over the steel with its laser cutter and spits out metal stencils.

These days the latest technology is vital to Olympia’s production but that wasn’t always the case. Founded in 1921 by Luigi Bresaola, during its heyday the company had 100 employees and the machines were made almost entirely by hand. As the century drew to a close, the business model proved unsustainable and in 1992 the company ceased production. Four years later Olympia was revived as Moka Express and eventually bought by Schätti, who introduced robotic equipment to shape, fold and weld the metal parts for the on-average 500 coffee machines the firm sells every year.

“There are more than 300 parts in the inner workings and not one is plastic,” says the CEO. “We use stainless steel and brass to maintain a temperature of 91C and a constant pressure over extraction time to make the perfect espresso,” he adds, heading towards the painting station. Here an employee sprays the steel boxes with quick-drying powder paint before they are baked at 180C.



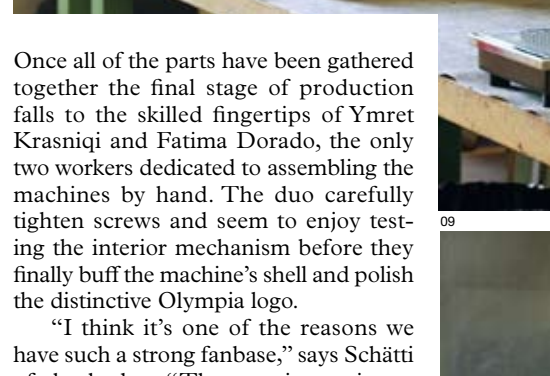
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## The roaster

It’s hard to argue with an Italian when it comes to coffee. It’s even harder if they’re from Naples, the top spot for a well-pulled espresso. Family-run roaster Passalacqua makes some of the best coffee locally at its 5,000 square metre facility on the city’s outskirts. Set up in 1948, it makes 14 blends for bar and home use, with 30 per cent shipped overseas. Visitors to Naples can sip a cup at Bar Mexico, a small chain of cafés. “We use only the best Arabica and in roasts that call for Robusta we never put more than 30 per cent to prevent any bitterness from coming out,” says 92-year-old owner Biagio Passalacqua, who tastes eight cups a day at the plant to test the quality. — [ic.passalacqua.com](http://ic.passalacqua.com)



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