

Starbucks Opening First Vietnam Café

MIKE IVES, Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Starbucks Corp. will open its first Vietnam cafe early next month in Ho Chi Minh City as part of its strategy to expand across Asia, the company said Thursday.

The Seattle-based chain will be entering a country of coffee lovers that already has an established market. At least two popular homegrown chains have dozens of locations nationwide, and family-run sidewalk cafes dot the streets and alleys of larger Vietnamese cities.

Starbucks said it operates more than 3,300 stores across 11 countries in China and the Asia-Pacific region, but its Vietnam cafes will celebrate the country's "coffee culture and heritage."

"We are looking forward to serving our customers in Vietnam in an authentic and locally relevant way," Jinlong Wang, president for Starbucks Asia Pacific, said in a statement.

Vietnam is the world's second-largest coffee producer behind Brazil and already provides high-quality beans for Starbucks stores in other countries.

The company said it has designated a subsidiary of Hong Kong-based Maxim's Group as its licensee in Vietnam.

French colonizers introduced coffee to Vietnam in the nineteenth century, but coffee here typically is stronger than European espresso and can be served with tea.

Starbucks, named after a character in Herman Melville's nineteenth-century novel Moby Dick, opened in 1971 and has nearly 18,000 retail stores in 60 countries.

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