



# Uniquely UNIC

In the sunshine of the French Gold Coast, in Nice, one finds UNIC. One of the three French manufacturers of coffee brewing machines, UNIC celebrates its 90th anniversary this year. ( By Jonathan Bell )

Although long located in France and a fixture of its HORECA sector, office and table-top vending coffee service markets, the company traces its roots to Turin in Italy where in 1919

engineer Marco Levi created his first espresso machine, the Idrotermica. The Levi family continues to direct the company three generations later in France.

UNIC is focused foremost on the



DCA (Dual Chamber Adaptor) new from UNIC for maximizing pod usage. The company's new DHA adapter is for caps.

French market, where it leads among French manufacturers in the nation's large, second only to Italy's, espresso machine market. The company manages the French market from a subsidiary office in Paris, and with 80 French distributors.

Abroad the company's espresso machine trademarks maintain sales on five continents with subsidiary offices in Seattle in the U.S. and in Tokyo. Global sales are strongest in North America, Japan plus Asia and the Pacific Rim, and in northern Europe (especially in Scandinavian and Benelux nations).

The mainstay of UNIC has been in engineering with unique approaches to coffee brewing that have resulted in a number of patents and awards. It is famed for its hydraulic infusion systems and serving group head technology. The company has designed three coffee unit groups for the production line, groups named Torino, Crema and Maestro.

These feature the mobile piston concept to provide a long pre-infusion while the mixing of hot and cold water is controlled by an adjustable teflon tube that manages thermal stability in keeping with the cup attribute expectations of differing espresso markets and as to volume required in the cup.

The UNIC array of espresso machines is complete from classic brewer models to super automatic systems, from ground/dosed coffee models to whole-bean-to cup equipment. UNIC is among pioneers in developing dedicated pod brewers and most recently its

patented DCA and DHA products. These are adaptors for UNIC's traditional infusion models that allow for multiple simultaneous servings of espresso from pods (DCA) and caps (DHA). Similar or different blends or origin coffee pods or caps can be brewed at the same time with these developments. Depending on the number of heads, this can be of up to eight cups at a time. The multiple cup dispensing is due to the dual serving characteristic of the heads on these models. This also allows for the possibility to maintain "classic" coffee espressing while at the

same time proffering pod or cap brewing. The company's goal is to offer end users support for creating an extensive and hybrid coffee menu.

In addition to this important new patent for the DCA and DHA adaptors, UNIC holds numerous other patents for espresso machine technology. The best known of these are for its registered Dosamat, Pony, Tango and SteamAir systems. Awards have come to the company over the past 90 years, including the coveted Apria ward in 2001 for the Tango innovations.

Both in France and Internationally, UNIC is well known for its Pony and Tango machine families. Pony includes Pony Espresso, which is pod dedicated and the Stella, a grind and dose machine. These are small counter-top foot print models. However, they incorporate two one-liter boilers, volumetric dosage programming, teflon multi-dimensional steam arm and cup warming tray. Both models feature the UNIC patented rotating filter holder system, which automatically expels used pod or coffee grounds into the waste bin. Another characteristic is the "easy milk" frothing device. Pony Espresso and Stella come in a stainless steel finish.

A company pride line is Tango. The line now extends to Solo, Duo and the new Uno models. Two independent 6.5-liter boilers distinguish the Duo. The patented group management system allows for serving up to four different drinks simultaneously. The integrated cup warmer tray on each model is ample, with the Duo offering place for up to 70 espresso cups at once. These super automatic models combine much of the most recent UNIC technological advances — the Duraswitch customizable and programmable key pad, steam wand and cappuccinatore device, programmable hot water and steam production. All Tango models offer two coffee bean hoppers, one of which is reserved for fresh ground, separate grinder for manual decaf dosing.

All of the above is somehow fitted into the new Tango Uno. A sleek model, small but talented, the single boiler Uno

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UNIC introduces the Tango Uno, everything a super automatic can be in a small package.

can run up to 220 cups per hour, with fresh ground super automatic operation. The machine control panel can be set to produce up to 10 different drinks. Uno also has adjustable coffee spout height to allow for high volume dispensing. Uno offers an integrated cappuccinatore device, the SteamAir thermo controlled auto-frother, computer interface and height adjustable feet. Extending this technology to a trendy housing design and with more stainless steel elements, UNIC has recently launched its Rumba Blue model. This compliments the existing Rumba range of classic espresso machines in 1-2-3 group sizes.

Top of the line in housing elegance and professional maximum duty is the ZI. Offered in 2-3-4 groups. The ZI can be set to auto or manual usage. It contains the best UNIC has to offer, including the Dosamat award-winning attribute, whereby the machine recognizes the filter handle once inserted and serves according to a programmed response. No other hand

work required for the cup servings. ZI has gusto not just in design but with such touches as neon lighting. Fitted with DCA or DHA adapters the ZI, as for the Rumba line as well, has virtually total coverage of the current range in espresso coffee delivery systems and espresso drinks.

According to UNIC it has not felt much pinch from the current economic downturn. This due to large contracts signed in 2007 for sales to fast food outlets. Also, the decided regression in the French HORECA market in 2008 seems to have abated. First half coffee sales in the sector improved slightly. This trend is expected to gain momentum following the lowering of VAT in French HORECA coffee points of sale from 19.6% to 5.5% in July 2009.

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