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# Coffee Intelligence: A Coffee Lover's Guide to the Perfect Cup of Java

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# Coffee Intelligence: A Coffee Lover's Guide to the Perfect Cup of Java

## Different Brews for Different Views

Once upon a time there was only the lowly percolator. Coiffed housewives would sit lovingly staring at water being heated until pressure forced it up a small tube and over a basket full of grounds.

Well, it was amusing to watch even if the coffee couldn't be very good. Boiling coffee and running the liquid over grounds more than once can each produce a brew less than ideal.

Then in the 1970s, as with so many things, life changed forever. The drip method - inexpensive, quick and even an improvement in taste - came to dominate the scene. A cup of grounds thrown in a plastic container over filter paper, a few minutes of nearly boiling water dripping over the result and - voila! - coffee in a glass pot.

Later came pre-packaged 'pods' of a favorite blend, changes in materials and all sorts of controls to adjust the brew, and internal spouts that spread the water evenly over the grounds. Whether cone or flat, always near 200F (93C), please.

In the '90s, espresso makers became the rage, with the importation of European culture and the application of American ingenuity to lower the cost without ruining the flavor. Hot water is forced under pressure through finely ground dark roast and in a few minutes, out pours a delicious, aromatic drink.

Add steamed, frothy milk and you have a cappuccino or latte, depending on the ratio of milk to coffee. A definite improvement and the variety of espresso makers makes for delightful experiments in chemistry.

The French plunger is another device aiding the spread of European methods, anywhere open-minded coffee innovators are seeking the new. A metal rod extends through the center of a glass cylinder, where it is topped with a handle. At the other end is a filter, fitting snugly inside the container.

Put grounds into the container and pour nearly boiling hot water in. Unlike the drip method, the grounds steep until the plunger is pressed. The result is a dark, full-bodied brew served right from the device.

One of the more esoteric brew methods uses the vacuum brewer: two glass or metal bowls, one atop the other. Heat causes water to rise into the upper, similar to the percolator principle. Remove the heat and as the liquid cools slightly a partial vacuum is created, drawing the hot water through the grounds and into the lower chamber.

The process is a pleasant show at a dinner party and a wonderfully fresh cup, since it can be carried out right at the table.

Of course, none of these methods is really new - most go back centuries in one form or another. The Ibrik from Turkey may be one of the oldest. Water is heated in a brass or copper container with a long handle and a grooved tongue. Finely ground coffee is added directly to the hot water and then poured, unfiltered. Strong!

Any of these will produce a delicious cup, but all bring out distinctive aspects of the ground. Try them all! You may find that a history lesson can also be a delectable taste tour.

### **Don't let Bad Coffee Hit Your Coffee Cups and Mugs**

Good coffee isn't as easy as percolating water through coffee grounds. Bad coffee, of course, is a cinch to make. But if you want the tastiest and freshest java for your morning wake up call, you need to take certain precautions before it even hits your coffee mugs.

First off, start with fresh cold water in your coffee machine if you want something delicious in your coffee cups. Steer clear of using water from the hot tap or water that has already boiled. For the best results in your coffee cups, fill your carafe with bottled or filtered water, especially if your home has old plumbing. Old pipes can leave an unpleasant flavor in your coffee mugs. This will also be the case if you live in an area that heavily chlorinates its tap water or has very hard water.

The temperature of the water is also important to deciding what ends up in your coffee mugs. The best temperature for brewing tasty coffee mugs is between 195 degrees and 205 degrees. If the water is too hot, it could leave a bitter taste in your mouth when you have these coffee cups. Water that is too cool, on the other hand, won't suck out all of the flavor from your grounds, leaving no flavor in your mouth after a few coffee mugs.

If you press brewing your morning coffee cups, reach this optimal water temperature by letting your water wait for a moment after it comes to a boil. For your typical dip coffee machines, you can get a similar effect by pre-heating the pot. Do this by pouring hot water into the empty carafe, which will warm it, and then dump this water out to start brewing.

Next, make sure you have the correct grind for your particular coffee machine. There is no one all-purpose grind. You need to choose your coffee grinds from the two main groups, depending if you are using a press pot or an electric machine to fill your coffee cups. For press pots, you'll want to grind your own beans for about 10 second in your typical, inexpensive blade grinder. This will leave your grinds at a medium to coarse consistency and make for delicious coffee mugs. For electric brewers and other drip machines, you'll need to grind your own beans for about 15-20 seconds. This will result in a medium to fine grind, not to mention perfectly steamy coffee mugs.

## **Get Your Coffee Fix with Folgers Coffee Pods**

Pods are fast becoming the hot new method for home coffee brewing, and Folgers coffee pods are leading the way. Folgers coffee pods bring the taste of classic coffeehouse coffee and a very easy way to brew java to the comfort of your own home.

It is an amazing technology that allows you to take the self-contained, individual Folgers coffee pods and turn them into a delicious pot of coffee that you'll be proud to share with your houseguests. This technology is an exclusive system that forces hot water through the ground beans at an extremely high pressure. It's no coincidence that this technique is the one that most leading coffeehouses use the most. It's also no coincidence that this system makes consistently a top-notch, single serving of coffee in under a minute.

The Folgers coffee pods system also allows you the chance to customize the size of your cup of joe, as well as the strength of your brew. Pick from a cup size, for instance, of seven ounces, nine ounces, or 14 ounces. Choose a light breakfast blend, an afternoon pick me up strength, or the toe clenching, rocket fuel variety of brew.

What's more, the Folgers coffee pods system makes it easy to brew a precisely measured portion of coffee. It gives you a freshness every time you make java, which would only be attainable normally if you opened a can of coffee each time you brewed. The coffee pods are easy to clean up after, leaving no messy coffee grounds, soggy filters, or dirty baskets. Plus, a single cup of coffee means you won't have the face the problem of wasting an entire pot of coffee.

You can buy Folgers coffee pods in a variety of flavors, such as mild, medium, and dark, along with regular and decaffeinated varieties. Folgers also has its most popular roast blends, like Classic Roast, Classic Decaf, 100% Columbian, and French Vanilla. In the future, you may also be able to purchase pods that make cappuccinos, lattes, and many other hot beverages. Forget about the future for now, though. Jump on this delicious opportunity now, in the present.

## **Serve Superior Coffee with Starbucks Coffee Pods**

Have you used a coffee pod yet? You may have and not even known you were. What you would have known, however, is how delicious your cup of coffee was. That's because pods bring the taste of premium coffeehouse coffee into your home or office. As if this doesn't sound delicious enough, just imagine Starbucks coffee pods. You heard it right. The leader in stellar coffee brewing is now making Starbucks coffee pods.

Starbucks coffee pods can be used with a variety of new coffee brewers on the market. These include the Senseo machine from Philips in Europe, which has been all the rage in Europe for the last few years. Philips is in the process of bringing this machine into the United States for about the same price as your standard drip machine. Appliance makers like Black & Decker, Krups, Mr. Coffee, and Hamilton Beach are all getting into the mix.

Once you purchase one of the machines, the rest is easy. Starbucks coffee pods work very simply, even easier than walking to your neighborhood Starbucks store. To use this new type of coffee machine, you place a pod into the designated pod tray. Then touch the start button. Watch as a fresh-brewed coffeehouse cup of coffee pours out in about a minute.

The system forces steaming water through ground beans at super high pressure. It's the same technique that most leading coffeehouses use the most because it makes consistently a top-notch, single serving of coffee in under a minute. It is truly amazing all of the benefits. First, you use self-contained, individual Starbucks coffee pods and turn them into tasty coffee that you'll be proud to share with your houseguests.

The Starbucks coffee pods system also allows you to customize the cup size and cup strength of every cup of joe. Choose from a cup size, for example, of seven ounces, nine ounces, or 14 ounces. Decide on a light breakfast blend, an afternoon pick me up strength, or the toe clenching, rocket fuel variety of brew. It makes it a cinch to brew a precisely measured portion of coffee. You won't have to worry about the problem of wasting an entire pot of coffee.

What's more, the Starbucks coffee pods give you that just-opened taste every time you make java. The pods are even simple to clean up after. There are no messy coffee grounds, soggy filters, or dirty baskets. That makes them a clean sweep: the benefits of Starbucks coffee with the perks of staying home.

## **Specialty Coffees**

In the 1930s, physicists started discovering a whole zoo full of exotic atomic particles. There were muons and kaons and who-knows-whatelse-ons. When told of these, the famous physicist Enrico Fermi said: 'If I wanted to remember all that I would have become a botanist.' Ironically, later he invented the process used in atomic bombs.

I feel the same way about coffee. It may be fascinating and delicious and even romantic, but sheesh - all those names!

There's the elegant and simple Frappe, but with a silent 'e'. Widely consumed in Europe and Latin America, it's a cold espresso made with two teaspoons of sugar and milk with crushed ice cubes. For a nice variation, add a quarter cup each of brandy and crème de cacao. Since it's served with a straw, I just wish those drinking it were silent, too.

The counterpart to the innocent Frappe is the wicked Cappuccino Borgia, named for the famed poisoner. You'll just die for one of these quarter-cup peeled orange, one and a half cup chocolate ice cream dreams. Add also six tablespoons of orange juice and a quarter-cup milk to an espresso, blend and start speaking 15th century Italian.

Re-enter the 21st century and jet to the Caribbean for a Calypso Cooler. A cup of chilled, extra strength coffee gets subjected to a couple of ripe bananas and two cups of coffee ice cream. Add four tablespoons of rum and lose your luggage.

While we're adding alcohol to our coffee, let's not forget the mysterious Latin: Caffee Zabaglone. A quarter cup of dry Marsala with a quarter cup of sugar starts the feast. Add a pinch of salt and four egg yolks, then whisk and cook until thick. Add a cup of Italian roast at room temperature and you've got a drink, breakfast and a hangover cure all in one.

But the ancestors of Rome have nothing on those of France in modern New Orleans. Add double strength American roast to a half-cup each of heavy cream, eggnog and bourbon and you have a Mardi Gras, with a silent 's'. Too bad the crowd isn't silent - it's 4 a.m. and I'm trying to sleep.

Ordinary Turkish coffee is famous for its dark, strong flavor cut with cardamom. But they're not the only ones to have discovered a good use for this ancient spice. Scandinavians make a Cardamom Kaffee.

Start with an eighth-cup of cognac and add two teaspoons of curacao, a teaspoon of sugar and a cardamom pod (cracked and seeded). Heat in the microwave for about ten seconds then light with a match. Pour on a half-cup of extra strength coffee and be prepared to douse a four-alarm fire.

Despite all the names, I have to give credit to the many creative inventors of all those different mixtures. They may not have invented huge bombs, but their products sure do give you a jolt!

## **How to Specialize in Specialty Coffee**

You've made the move to specialty coffee. You've made a bold move to enter the world of the tastiest, freshest coffee that there is. Specialty coffee typically have gone from the roaster to your brewed cup as fast as humanly possible. After all, coffee is a perishable and delicate food. Its peak taste only has a short life span. It will lessen with time, air exposure, and moisture exposure. So speed in the entire coffee process, from when the beans were picked all the way to when your machine brews your pot, is essential.

Since specialty coffee is especially perishable items with a very limited shelf life, make to keep up your end of the bargain when you get it home. Store it in airtight containers or a tightly closed coffee bag like you get from the supermarket or gourmet store when you first buy the coffee. Heat, light, air and moisture all can make your coffee taste stale. That's because all of these factors hasten the release of the coffee's aromatic gases over time. Refrigerating or freezing the coffee may slow this process, but it won't completely prevent it.

Also make certain to grind your specialty coffee just before brewing. Coffee beans are like little containers that hold in the coffee oils and aromatic compounds. The flavor is exposed once a bean is ground. If brewing doesn't happen right away, however, the exquisite flavor and aroma can be lost. In other words, grinding coffee yourself is the second step to experiencing the most out of your coffee.

The third step is knowing exactly how long to let your specialty coffee brew. If you let water contact the grounds for too long, for instance, your coffee can end with an overly bitter coffee. On the other hand, if you let water contact the grounds for not long enough, your coffee may lack its full flavor.

The final step in good specialty coffee making comes after your coffee is brewed. Don't let your coffee sit on a burner or hotplate too long afterwards. More than 20 minutes is too long because the coffee's taste will start to become bitter. Your taste buds, and your stomach, will thank you.

### **The Secrets of a Coffee Bean Bakery**

You go to a cake bakery when you want a delicious dessert, so it makes sense that you would go to a coffee bean bakery when you want the most delicious coffee beans. Of course, you might not actually find a store called a coffee bean bakery. But a specialty store that roasts their own beans by hand will do the trick. In many of these cases, the specialty store will employ skilled roasters to add exquisite flavor and aroma to each and every one of their blends, ensuring consistent quality bean after bean.

In these specialty stores, roasting coffee is as an art, not just a method of developing coffee flavor. They understand that each coffee bean possesses a different size, shape, color, and density. Each bean requires different roasting heat and timing to bring out its full flavor. And, yes, you can make out the difference. It's like the difference between eating a cake from a master baker and eating one out of a box. Just like a top-notch cake bakery, a coffee bean bakery focuses on extracting the most out of the coffee beans, while calling out the individual characteristics that are essential to each coffee blend.

Deep roasting also does more. Even coffee you buy in a can are roasted to an extent. Even a machine can roast a coffee bean from green to brown. But a roasting expert deep roasts his product, bringing out the utmost body, flavor, and acidity. This gives the finished product a certain viscosity, as well as a lively, energetic feeling on your tongue. All of this can be lost when a bean is roasted half-heartedly.

The catch to full roasting used by experts is roasting the coffee slowly instead of rushing it. It may sound hokie, but bean roasting experts almost "talk" to their beans during the process, to see what they exactly need to be roasted to their fullest potential. It always means, nonetheless, that bean experts thoroughly roast their product all the way through.

If you want a good test to see if beans are properly roasted in this manner, crack one open before you buy it. A good bean, more often than not, will be darker on the inside than it is on the outside. Poorly roasted beans, which have been processed too quickly, will be darker on the outside. Buy these at your own risk!

## **Fun with Flavored Coffee Syrups**

The coffee revival across the United States has led to an explosion in the types, tastes, and sizes of coffee beverages. They come now in variety of delicious flavors, with a variety of crazy exotic-sounding names, like frappaccino and mocha latte. One of the reasons that so many different drinks are available is the flavored coffee syrups that coffee houses use. Don't get worried. You just had a raspberry nutmeg latte yesterday, right, and you're worried whether you or not just blew your diet? Well, it won't be the flavored coffee syrups in your beverage that will ruin your good eating habits. These concoctions don't have bad ingredients to ruin your health. They just bring great taste to the mix.

The top flavored coffee syrups offer dozens of flavors to choose from. This isn't a trend in the coffee world started just a couple years ago in the States. Nope, professional coffee makers around the world have relied on all of these flavors for years to please their clientele. The best brands offer rich and natural flavors. The syrups should get this profound taste from pure and natural ingredients. The manufacturer takes the base ingredients, the natural fruits, nuts, spices, water and sugar, and makes them into a highly concentrated syrup. You'll notice that this list of ingredients does not include any fat or cholesterol. All top syrups should be free of these bad compounds. Check the label of the syrup at your favorite coffee house to be certain.

Lately, with diabetes such a big worldwide concern, as well as the emergence of low-carb diets, the top flavored coffee syrup manufacturers have put out sugar-free line-ups. These don't lose out on flavor. Many of your favorite coffee flavors will be a part of this new sugar-free line, including vanilla, hazelnut, almond, caramel, Irish cream, chocolate, raspberry, and amaretto. With these natural flavors, though, you won't miss the sugar. Instead, most manufacturers are adding a blend of sugar free and calorie free sweeteners like Splenda, which is a natural sugar free sweetener. Now you have no choice but to enjoy your delicious triple mocha nut cappuccino with all of those delicious syrups added for rich and fulfilling flavor.

## **The Secrets Behind Powder Cappuccino French Vanilla Drinks**

You love your powder cappuccino French vanilla drinks, but did you ever stop to wonder how that your power cappuccino French vanilla favorites come out of that crazy machine? It is a long and amazing process, so fantastic that you might think Willy Wonka thought it up.

One of the things you probably love most about your powder cappuccino French vanilla drinks is their incredibly creamy, foamy taste and texture. You are drawn to this foam like kids to pizza, which makes sense. Foams have been part of foods for a long time. Food manufacturers have used them to give texture and lightness to their products, for the same reason a chef adds beaten egg whites to fluff up certain recipes.

For your cappuccino drink, though, the foam is more important. It must last on top of your drink the whole time you drinking the product. Otherwise, the cappuccino will be a disappointment. The methods that manufacturers use to get you your world-class foam from a powder are amazing. They allow the powder to become a foam that not only must flow

smoothly like a liquid, but must be easy to prepare, too. The secret is in innovative high-tech engineering, which has created micro-bubbles that form instant foam when added to a specially formulated milk-based creamer and hot water.

The base of this recipe is milk proteins and milk sugar such as lactose. This is the powder in your powder cappuccino. This powder is actually a protein-lactose mixture that's full of glass-like material called micro-bubbles. These bubbles are filled with nitrogen, which is then added to the coffee powder and the creamer.

The result is your delicious vanilla cappuccino. Of course, you're not getting a traditional Italian cappuccino, made when a professional barista (espresso maker) carefully pours steam-frothed milk onto the top of a brewed espresso. However, you wouldn't know if you didn't watch the machine barista make your powder cappuccino for you. Your cappuccino will still come with the tasty brown coffee below and the delicious white milky foam above. You may only be in your local convenience store and not in Milan, but your taste buds won't know the difference.

### **The Secret to How to Make a Latte Can be Found Here**

You could save yourself upwards of \$5 a pop if you knew how to make a latte. You know those frothy beverages are well worth large sums of money, but it would be even more fulfilling if you could make one on your own, right? All you really need to become an independent latte drinker are the basic steps on how to make a latte. Once you have those, then you can perfect the process on your own.

The first part of the process of how to make a latte is making a great espresso. And the first step to this is grinding your espresso beans properly. If you don't grind them enough, your grounds will be too coarse. The end result will be espresso that is thin and weak. On the other hand, if you grind your espresso beans too much, your grinds will be too fine. Your espresso will then be bitter. Why even bother with a grinder, you ask? Grinding your own espresso beans, using a special espresso grinder or burr grinder, is only recommended by all the espresso experts in the know!

Once you have properly ground espresso beans, get your machine going. It should take 15 to 20 seconds to brew if you have a good pump. When it comes out, the espresso should have a darkish-brown foam on top, which is called crema by people who know how to make a latte. (You want to become like these people, remember?) Make sure to stop the whole process once the liquid flowing out of the machine becomes whitish-brown. This stuff will ruin your latte. Forcing more water through the grounds at this point will only give your drink a bitter taste.

Once you have your one to one and a half fluid ounces of espresso, it's time to froth and heat the milk. You could heat the milk in a microwave or by stirring it in a pan on top of your stove. However, if you really want to learn how to make a latte, then you must do it as the pros do it. This means using the steam heating tools on an espresso machine. They work better than any other method when it comes to efficiency, speed, texture, and taste.

## **A Can't Miss Recipe for Mocha Latte**

The popularity of coffee shops across America has led to an explosion of tasty and exotic coffee-based beverages. They come in variety of delicious flavors, from chocolate to espresso, mint to strawberry, vanilla and nutmeg. One of the common denominators of all these drinks, besides their frothy appealing appearance, is their price tag. Many cost upwards of five bucks, the same price as many lunches at your local fast-food joint.

I don't know about you, but there are a few other things I'd rather invest my money in than some crushed ice, a shot of espresso, and a plastic cup. Don't get me wrong, I love mocha lattes just as much as the next person, and I would kill for a recipe for mocha latte that I could use at home. Actually, I don't need to kill anyone to get a recipe for mocha latte. Here's one right below!

This recipe for mocha latte starts like a traditional café latte, which in Americans is a lot different from what they do in Europe. So if you're from Europe, read especially carefully to get the American nuances. Where you come from in most places in Europe, café latte consists of one part espresso and three parts frothed milk. The maker then pours both at the same time into a large bowl or wide brimmed cup.

Here in America, though, the base of the recipe for mocha latte only sometimes begins with the same proportions of espresso and frothed milk: one to three. Other times, the proportions depend on what other flavorings you add. For instance, if you add whipped cream as a topping, your café latte may consist of one part espresso to two and one half parts frothed milk. That extra half part becomes the whipped cream or other extra flavoring.

In our case for this recipe for mocha latte, our extra flavorings will be the chocolate that gives the drink its mocha name. We will also get a little crazy and add mint to the mix, sort of like a steamy bowl of mint chocolate chip ice cream. Start with 1.75 ounces of chocolate syrup. Pour the chocolate syrup into a 12-ounce cup with 0.5 ounces of cream de menthe syrup. Then add 2 ounces of freshly brewed espresso, topped with the hot steamed or foamed milk. Stir, making sure to lift from the bottom. This will bring the syrups up. Top the whole concoction with a dollop of whipped cream, chocolate powder, and shaved chocolate.

## **How To Make A Great Espresso!**

Every barista (professional maker of coffee drinks) will have his or her method. Here's mine...

It all starts with water. No coffee grounds, no matter the quality, can overcome an association with poor water. It must be fresh and very hot. Yes, even water can get stale, thanks to mildew, poor cleaning practices, and inadequate filtering. The optimum temperature is 203F (95C), nearly boiling.

Next comes the coffee. Select arabica - whether from Brazil, Bogota, or elsewhere, grown above 3000 feet (915m) and delivered fresh for roasting. Either self-roasted or bought within a few days after, the coffee should have that 'fresh food' smell.

Robusta - though easier to grow and more disease resistant - has more caffeine and less flavor. It should be reserved for those quick pick-me-up cups, not used for an espresso to be savored.

Finely ground in burr, not blade, grinders the roast should be dark - French or Viennese. The name refers to the color, not the origin. Blade 'grinders' actually chop, not grind. Burr grinders have pyramid shaped teeth on two plates that grind the beans between them.

The distance between the plates determines the fineness of the granules. Sand grain-sized is good, powder is too fine, and small-gravel too large. Of course, the grind should not be exposed to air any longer than necessary. Coffee, like any food, will oxidize and absorb odors from the air. Neither is conducive to a good cup.

And, last but not least, a good espresso requires a clean machine of good quality. 'Good quality' means: generates heat by boiler or thermoblock and is capable of producing pump pressure of 9 bar or better. A 'thermoblock' heats water as it passes through the machine on the way to the pump. Avoid the cheaper units that rely on steam to create pressure.

Now you have the basic elements. Next comes the process.

Pre-warm the equipment by running good water through a clean machine. You can turn the machine on, let the water heat, and run a cup through with no coffee to warm the surfaces and flush the system.

Add your ground roast and pack down slightly, as you would pipe tobacco. Just as with pipes, you should be feel some springiness, but the coffee shouldn't scatter.

Insert the hopper in the machine firmly and place a warmed espresso cup at the outlet. Start the machine and in about five seconds you should have a thin, steady stream. (About 20 seconds for a double shot.)

For a cappuccino, warm half a cup of organic milk in the microwave about 90 seconds, froth, and add to the espresso. Garnish to taste with cinnamon, nutmeg or chocolate. For those who like it sweet a little organic sugar goes a long way.

Simple, straight forward, and easy. Start with good ingredients, keep your equipment clean, and don't burn the roast. The result? A great cup!

### **The Cut-above Cuban Espresso Coffee Recipes**

Imagine the old days in Havana. Old men dressed in white linens playing dominos and sipping some of the finest espresso in the world, while cigar smoke and guitar music linger in the air.

When one round of espresso is finished, women in beautifully woven dresses gladly deliver more. Relive these Cuban glory days in your own home with your do-it-yourself Cuban espresso coffee recipes. Cuban cigars may be illegal, but great coffee made from these Cuban espresso coffee recipes definitely isn't. It isn't even difficult to make.

The first of the Cuban espresso coffee recipes involves making the beverage on your stovetop. Start with one ounce of good water per serving and heat it over a low flame in a small pot. Add one rounded tablespoonful of coffee per ounce of water when the water boils. Stir briefly. It's finished when it boils again. The tricky part comes now at the end. Filter the espresso by using a Cuban flannel strainer, which you can find at Cuban or exotic markets. Your typical paper coffee, on the other hand, won't work. They will clog up instead.

The other type of Cuban espresso coffee recipes utilizes the aluminum stove-top espresso makers. These sort of look like steel tea kettles and are available at Latin, European, or specialty markets and coffee shops. To make the espresso in one of these pressurized contraptions, add water to it up to the brass safety valve in the bottom chamber. Place the filter basket, or funnel piece, in the bottom chamber. Add enough ground to coffee to make it level to the brim, if not rounded in the center. Seal the upper chamber with the lower chamber. Then heat over low to medium heat. It's done when you the coffee starts to make bubbling sounds in the top chamber. Take the coffee maker off the stove.

Whatever Cuban espresso coffee recipes you use, try adding a big teaspoon of sugar to your serving. Or boil milk for a moment and add it for café con leche. However you have your Cuban espresso, it's as close to Cuba as you can get without breaking the embargo!

### **Purchasing Chocolate Covered Espresso Beans Wholesale**

You want to buy chocolate covered espresso beans wholesale. You know that the Internet is probably the best place to get the right deals and the high-end products. But what you aren't sure of is how to go about buying chocolate covered espresso beans wholesale without risking your credit card numbers or your identify. Everybody's heard of those horror tales about people getting their identities stolen and their bank accounts cleared out. It can happen if you don't know how to shop online.

Buying chocolate covered espresso beans wholesale online, or any product for that matter, is not as frightening or difficult as you might think. You just need to know the precautions when you start entering your credit card numbers online.

First, always know what you're buying. Although a Web site says it has the best chocolate covered beans, make sure to study the seller's item description, including any photographs. Watch out for fine print and adjectives that might suggest that what you'll get in the mail won't exactly be what they offered online. And remember the old saying, "If something sounds too good to be true..." If those high-grade espresso beans seem too cheap, chances are they might not be as high-grade as you thought.

The second step is to take care how you buy. Before making a purchase at a Web site, find out what type of payments the site accepts and how they ship their products. A red flag could be any Web site that asks for Social Security numbers, driver's license numbers, or bank account information. You shouldn't have to give these things for some candy.

Record every purchase you make online, too. That means printing hard copies of all transaction information, including the shipping information and any e-mails that the Web site sends you. Keep the name of the Web site, the official online description of the beans you bought (how many pounds, for instance), and the exact date, time, and price of your purchase. These will be very handy if the Web site shortchanges you.

Worse comes to worse, if you still don't feel secure buying your delicious candies online, most Web sites also offer an 800 number. That way, you can order your beans the old-fashioned way over the phone. Or better yet, have them send you their wholesale catalog.

### **Ace Your Espresso Coffee Reviews**

You can't get your hands on anything more valuable than espresso coffee reviews if you're a fan of the heady beverage. Espresso coffee reviews could help you find the perfect blend of grounds to use in your espresso machine to produce that perfect shot of liquid Italy.

However, just as important as espresso coffee reviews is a thorough knowledge of what it takes to make a demitasse of legal speed. No matter what type or blend of espresso beans that you use, for example, always make sure that your beans are finely ground and tightly packed. Then, when water and steam are forced through it, the coffee will release the proper amount of delicate oils, which are normally lost in your standard automatic drip coffee machine.

The exact taste that you get out of these oils depends on what blend of coffee beans you use. You can use really almost any kind of coffee to make espresso. But the pros keep track of espresso coffee reviews and select a blend of coffees beans. These beans don't have to be all a dark roast. Great espresso is actually a blend of many different levels of roasts. In Italy, the traditional espresso makers, or baristas, use three coffees in their blend. Usually in these traditional Italian espresso blends, one coffee is the potent Robusta bean, which has more of a caffeine punch than America's favorite, Arabica coffee.

Whatever blend you are using, you know you'll get good espresso coffee reviews as a top-notch barista if you can make your shot of espresso with the creamy, cinnamon colored foam on top, called crema. Complete your Italian transformation by following the proper drinking customs, too. First, cup your hand over your nose and breath in the espresso fumes for a minute or two. Then swallow down the contents of your traditional shot-sized demitasse cup in one gulp.

Thanks to positive espresso coffee reviews, word of mouth, and the overall coffee craze, it is easier and easier to experience this secret taste of espresso. It has also opened the door to all sorts of espresso-based drinks such as the latte and the cappuccino.

## **Decaf, Good or Bad?**

Recently a variety of the coffee tree was discovered that naturally contains almost no caffeine. Until and unless that species finds its way into commercial production, we're left with the current methods for removing unwanted caffeine from coffee. But how do those methods affect the taste of our java?

Blind taste tests suggest that most people can't really tell the difference between decaf and regular, provided both kinds are processed properly and the cup brewed well. But, for those who can...

Among the methods for removing caffeine from coffee is treatment with hot water, followed by rinsing in methylene chloride.

Maybe you didn't know your coffee had already seen water before you got to it? In fact, several times. The berries are rinsed after picking to soften the outer fruit for removal, then rinsed again to help eliminate the remaining flesh.

And possibly you were unaware your grounds had taken a dip in the swimming pool before being served. (Ok, swimming pool water is really dilute hydrochloric acid, not methylene chloride. Never let a chemist stand between you and a good line.)

So, the taste difference is less likely to come from the presence or absence of caffeine as from any remaining processing chemicals and whether they removed flavor-producing components.

Chemical removal of the caffeine from green, unroasted beans starts by warming them in hot water or steam. That opens the bean's pores. Then the beans are rinsed in methylene chloride, which binds to the caffeine and is then flushed away.

Alternatively, the beans can be soaked for several hours in hot water, where the caffeine leaches out into the bath. The beans are removed and methylene chloride introduced to the bath. There it bonds with the caffeine, not the flavored components that have washed out of the bean. The beans are then soaked again where they reabsorb the flavor compounds.

An entirely different process, called the Swiss method, also soaks the beans in hot water for several hours, but no methylene chloride is used. Instead the caffeine is removed by filtering the water through activated charcoal. More or less pure carbon, the molecular structure of activated charcoal has been altered to provide a large surface area for other molecules to stick to.

The first method is less expensive and so is preferred by most manufacturers. And - no surprise - there are ongoing debates about whether it degrades the taste. As usual, quality control makes the largest difference. But, there are even techniques available to the individual for reducing caffeine intake.

Darker, less acidic, roasts already contain less caffeine as a consequence of the roasting process. And blends of decaf and regular are an option for those who simply must cut down.

As to the taste.... Well, as in any issue of taste, individual preferences generally swamp any objective chemical differences. Since caffeine has an inherently bitter taste, many can detect its presence or absence. Whether that makes decaf good or bad is, as they say, a matter of taste.

### **Get Cooking with a Coffee of the Month Club**

A coffee of the month club is one the best gifts you can give a friend or loved one, or yourself. You can give, and get, some of the best roasts that the world has to offer. First, you have beans that could come all the way from Africa, which are renowned for their wine-like undertones and their wild hints of the jungle. Central America will ship you beans with a smooth taste and an even well balanced flavor. The beans from Brazil, which most Americans drink all the time without knowing, will be the top-notch kind you can't find in a can, with the same familiar and reassuring flavor but accentuated. But whether it's you receiving the coffee of the month club, or your dearest friends, you can't completely enjoy your 12 annual presents without properly knowing how to make the coffee.

The key to getting the utmost out of your coffee of the month club is setting up your drip coffee machines with a gold, nylon, or other type of permanent filter. Such permanent filters ensure that the essential flavor and oils of the coffee grinds make their way through the filter and into the water. What's more, these permanent filters accomplish this without adding unwanted nasty tastes.

Paper filters will do just that to your delicious blends from the coffee of the month club. Paper filters leave an aftertaste into your morning cup of joe. Paper filters also absorb some of the special flavor molecules and aromatic oils from your coffee grinds. You lose these, and you lose the java's tantalizing taste. If you must use paper filters, rinse them with hot water beforehand. Better yet, use permanent filters. You may need to clean them before each use, but it will be well worth it.

Also, when brewing your coffee of the month club varieties in a drip coffee machine, grind them to a medium to fine grinds of coffee. Always start with cold water, and make sure that your coffee machine is fine tuned to being the water to the proper "cooking" temperature. The proper water temperature is between 195 degrees and 205 degrees, which guarantees that the best coffee ground extraction. And then follow one last rule before you can actually taste your delicious new coffees: dump the grounds from the filter before the last couple of drops of water drip through.

### **Pick the Perfect Coffee Gift Basket**

You know how hard it can be to pick out clothes to give to a friend or loved one for a present. What makes you think it should be any different when you buy a coffee gift basket as a present? Actually, buying a coffee gift basket for the java junky in your life is a fantastic idea all

to itself. But you can perfect the plan by choosing the types of coffee for the basket that you know they'll love.

There are a handful of guidelines that the experts recommend for selecting the right blends for your coffee gift basket. The first guideline is to decide what kind of coffee body your friend or family member prefers. For instance, do they like the bottom of the pot? That means they probably like their coffee stiff. Or do they usually add less than a whole packet to their pots of coffee? That could indicate that they like their joe on the light side.

Next, take this preference to a map. You see, if you're going to figure out the perfect coffee gift basket, you'll need to know your geography. Different regions of the world tend to have different coffee flavors. The Central and South America continents, for example, tend to grow coffees with light-bodies, higher acidities, and sweeter flavors. The African continent, on the other hand, offers blends with medium bodies, medium acidities, and wilder flavors. Finally, the Asian-Indonesian-Pacific continent grows the coffees with the stiff, heavy bodies, low acidities, and hearty earthier flavors.

Some examples to look for in a coffee gift basket from Central and South America, or the Caribbean, would be the delicious blends that come out of the Jamaican Blue Mountains. Brazil and Colombia also are huge coffee producers, so anything from those two countries will fit the bill.

If you want to include African varieties in your coffee gift basket, look for specific types from Tanzania and Yemen. As for Asian blends, particular coffees from Sumatra are well known for their dark roasts, as well as brews from New Guinea, Sulawesi, and Java. Whatever you choose, you will be sure to bring a smile to the face of your friend and loved one.

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