

# Creating the best cup of coffee requires finding the right brew

One of the simplest joys in life is taking my first sip of coffee in the morning. There is nothing like the fresh taste of my favorite drink as I get ready to start my day. I am sure you know the feeling, especially those of you who have made coffee their drink of choice in morning (sorry orange juice). I have been an avid coffee drinker for most my life. I was raised on it on a very young age with my love for this caffeine delicacy only growing over the years.

For the other baristas out there, I am sure you can relate in trying out various coffee brewing techniques before finding the 'one' for you. Like finding a partner in life, finding the perfect coffee blend is essential because your sanity (I mean, happiness) depends on it.

I will shed some light on the various techniques that can be used when making the beloved drink that we all know as coffee.

---

Before we get into the different types of brewing techniques, let's bullet point what essential in making a good coffee brew in the first place:

**Coffee beans** – the finer they are, the better the brew. Many people enjoy grinding them on their own, while others prefer to buy them that way.

**The water-to-coffee grounds ratio** – The less water, the stronger the coffee whereas too much water, the weaker the coffee. Finding that balance is instrumental in making a perfect cup of our favorite caffeinated beverage.

**Water temperature** – Keep an eye on the temperature when making coffee. I always relied on a machine to do that for me. For those who enjoy more of a hand-made brew, keep the water temperature between 195-205 degrees Fahrenheit when taking on a barista role with making coffee.



## Which Brew Are You?

# THE CATEGORIES

## **Instant Gratification**

*The Percolator*

*Drip Brew*

*Self-Serve*

Quick, simple and easy to use. These brews are ready with a push of a button.

## **Hand Made Heaven**

*French Press*

*AeroPress*

*The Chemex*

*The Vacuum Pot*

Hand crafted coffee brews that utilize fine coffee grounds and a personalized touch to make a heavenly drink.

## **Smooth & Strong**

*Espresso Machine*

*The Moka Pot*

For those that love their morning brew a little thicker and stronger, these blends make espressos smooth and flavorful.

## **An Acquired Taste**

*Turkish Coffee*

*Instant Coffee*

Brews that some love and some do not. They are an acquired taste, but still a blend that many use and enjoy.

---

## **The Percolator (Instant Gratification)**

Shaped like a long tea pot, a percolator brews coffee through an inner heating chamber that leads water through the inner spout to the top of the device where the coffee beans are stored. Historically, the percolator was heavily popular until the 1970's.

### **The Good**

- ✓ A percolator is a great device for hosting a group of people or even a small party.
- ✓ It can make a solid cup of coffee, and it very rarely comes out tasting weak.
- ✓ I have found that a percolator makes any brand of coffee taste fairly decent
- ✓ No size coffee ground is required

### **The Bad**

- ✗ Waiting for it brew can be torturous, especially if you haven't had any coffee yet
- ✗ A burnt flavor can happen if you get the coffee at the end of the pot (Close to the heat source)
- ✗ Out-dated machine

**Skilled Barista Level:** Low/medium



\$25 - \$60 (PRICES)

## **The Automatic Drip (Instant Gratification)**

The automatic drip coffee brewer came into the spotlight in the 1970's and has been a household name (or product) ever since. This device utilizes a water reservoir located in the back of the machine. Once heated, the boiled water would run through the filtered grounds of coffee which sit on top of the coffee pot. The brewed coffee would then pour into the kettle which would be kept hot by the heated plate underneath the pot.

### **The Good**

- ✓ Creates a lovely coffee aroma that fills the air as it brews
- ✓ Doesn't have a 'burnt' taste to it after having been kept warm by its hot plate
- ✓ Fairly easy to use
- ✓ No special coffee ground size is required

### **The Bad**

- ✗ Trial & error system on finding your perfect coffee strength
- ✗ The system can cause a lot wasted coffee (and money) if you are the only one in the house that uses it.
- ✗ No flexibility of making anything less than four cups.

**Skilled Barista Level:** Low/medium



\$20 - \$95 (PRICES)

## **Single-Serve Brew (Instant Gratification)**

The Keurig is an example of a single brewing system. Debuting in early 2000, the Keurig doesn't rely on a heating system to keep the coffee warm after its brewed. It simply heats the water that will be used to brew the one Keurig cup (K-cup). Just insert your K-cup of choice and choose the desired coffee cup size. Once the coffee is finished brewing, the Keurig cools off until it needs to be used again.



\$40 - \$100+ (PRICES)

### **The Good**

- ✓ It automatically calculates the perfect balance of water to the grounds of coffee within a K-cup; You no longer have to worry about making coffee too weak or too strong
- ✓ The Keurig fits the Millennial lifestyle: fast, good and instant gratification in the end result
- ✓ Can make three sizes of coffee: tea cup, regular or large

## ***The Bad***

- ✗ The cost of the K-cups can be expensive. However, there online shopping outlets that offer discounts on bulk orders
- ✗ Not really good if you are having a huge party; better used for intimate gatherings
- ✗ Using vinegar to clean it – after running 100+ cups through, the taste of vinegar should finally come out.

***Skilled Barista Level:*** Low (Just buy the K-cups and insert into the device)

---

## **French Press (Hand-Made Heaven)**

For a truly hand crafted cup of coffee one could try a French Press style brew. Like its name, this device requires the user to press the brewed coffee down with a plunger before it's poured into the cup. This helps keep the grounds from getting into the brewed coffee.

## ***The Good***

- ✓ Doesn't take long to make (estimated time is about four minutes)
- ✓ The device is more portable and travel size French presses are available
- ✓ Less coffee grounds in the coffee

## ***The Bad***

- ✗ The coffee can end up tasting bitter if left inside the device too long
- ✗ No 'heater' to keep it warm should you not drink it right away
- ✗ Can be cumbersome for those who want an instant cup or pot of coffee
- ✗ Second heating source required for the water

***Skilled Barista Level:*** Medium



\$10 - \$65 (PRICES)

## **AeroPress (Hand Made Heaven)**

The Aeropress brews coffee or espresso through a plunger style system similar to that of a French press. The Aeropress device uses a filter and chamber that the coffee grounds rest on before hot water is added to the press. Once the water has been warmed and placed inside the cylinder, you begin to plunge down on to the device until you reach the bottom. You have to take your time when plunging down (between 20-60 seconds).

### **The Good**

- ✓ Same caffeine potency of an espresso
- ✓ Shorter brewing time in comparison to a French press, which leads to less acidity
- ✓ The pressure of this device is used to enhance the flavor of the coffee
- ✓ More modernized in its capabilities of making coffee

### **The Bad**

- ✗ There are many parts to this device; I would find them easy to misplace or even lose
- ✗ While it would be fun to use, I would long for a device where I didn't have to do most of the work
- ✗ Second heating source required for the water



**\$22 - \$45 (PRICES)**

***Skilled Barista Level:*** Medium (The key is in the plunging)

---

## **The Chemex (Hand Made Heaven)**

Probably one of the coolest devices that I have seen, the Chemex brewer is shaped like an hour glass with a wooden sleeve that lines its neck. Using a filter, heated water and coffee the Chemex device is used to 'bloom' (or brew) the coffee once it's been placed inside the filter. The coffee will filter down to the bottom part of the device, making it ready to be served.



\$40 - \$300+ (PRICES)

### **The Good**

- ✓ Sleek, yet old-fashioned, look to it
- ✓ Pretty easy to learn
- ✓ Due to the filter of the Chemex, it tends to remove the coffee oils that can lead to the coffee having a different taste

### **The Bad**

- ✗ The taste of the coffee can be different due to the makeup of the coffee filter
- ✗ Requires a second heating source for the water
- ✗ Recommended to grind the coffee before use (This could be good for some people who like to do that)

**Skilled Barista Level:** Low/Medium

## **The Vacuum Pot (Hand Made Heaven)**

A device that mirrors a chemical contraption, the vacuum pot utilizes vacuum-like suction and water vapor to brew a delightful pot of coffee. Placing the water and coffee grounds together in the top kettle, the bottom burner pulls the blended coffee down while freeing it of its coffee grounds into the lower portion of the device.

### **The Good**

- ✓ Makes smooth, flavorful coffee
- ✓ Brings out the most of the coffee bean
- ✓ A real barista experience in brewing and making coffee

### **The Bad**

- ✗ A lot of work in getting it ready; not something to put on if you have to rush out the door
- ✗ Not the easiest device to place in your kitchen
- ✗ Use very fine grounds; anything too big will clog the vacuum and the coffee won't pull down into the bottom chamber



\$65 - \$200+ (PRICES)

**Skilled Barista Level:** High (more for someone that's a chemist)

## **The Espresso Maker (Smooth & Strong)**

Anyone who drinks coffee (and those who do not) knows what an espresso is. A highly caffeinated drink a single shot or smaller-size cup, an espresso can take you from lethargic to energetic fairly quickly with its strong, thick and flavorful mixture. Using pressurized water to the point of almost boiling, an espresso machine enhances the coffee experience by making a thicker, more tasteful, blend.

### **The Good**

- ✓ Makes a strong espresso coffee
- ✓ Creates a thick, flavorful blend
- ✓ Various types of espresso makers out there to choose from

### **The Bad**

- ✗ If you're not a fan of espresso, then you're out of luck with making much else
- ✗ Small portion sizes; I enjoy larger cups of coffee
- ✗ Is more of an acquired taste; not too many people may want espresso versus having a cup of coffee



\$75 - \$500+ (PRICES)

**Skilled Barista Level:** Medium/High

## **The Moka Pot (Smooth & Strong)**

A stove-top kettle device that creates a thick flavorful coffee blend is called the Moka pot. Utilizing boiling water, it pushes the coffee grinds that are rested inside the pot to the top of the kettle in a brewed consistency. It's a popular device among Europeans and in Latin America.

### **The Good**

- ✓ Makes strong coffee
- ✓ Creates a thick, flavorful blend; similar to an espresso
- ✓ More caffeine and flavors are extracted through this device

### **The Bad**

- ✗ You have to periodically replace the rubber seal & filters
- ✗ More for a fan an espresso, not coffee
- ✗ Fairly easy to use, but may take some trial & error before finding the perfect blend



\$27 - \$50 (PRICES)

**Skilled Barista Level:** Medium

## **Turkish Coffee (An Acquired Taste)**

Turkish coffee is a unique blend of flavors that is definitely an acquired taste for any coffee drinker. I had the pleasure (or displeasure) of trying Turkish coffee once before. I couldn't get through the first sip without wanting to spit it back out. Regardless of my feelings, it is still one blend of coffee that is important in understanding its makeup.

A blend of the finest grained coffee beans (any kind will do), Turkish coffee requires the immersing of the beans into milk or water that is warm but not boiling. As the coffee warms within the liquid of your choice, sugar is added to the mixture. Once the coffee and sugar dissipate fully, the coffee is placed on a medium-level heat until it comes to an almost boil. Once it reaches its peak, the coffee is then poured into cups ready to be served.

### **The Good**

- ✓ A variety of sugar levels can be used when being added to the drink
- ✓ Cultural experience in making this brew
- ✓ Not a lot of equipment is needed
- ✓ Quick to make

### **The Bad**

- ✗ You cannot let the coffee boil too long; it can give the drink a bitter taste
- ✗ If you had the sugar and coffee grounds too soon, it could throw off the taste of the coffee
- ✗ Coffee must be finely grounded to achieve the desired taste (A lot of trial & error)
- ✗ Buying ground from the store is possible, but the flavor of the beans will fade over time



\$29 - \$45 (PRICES)

***Skilled Barista Level:*** Medium/High

---

## **Instant Coffee (An Acquired Taste)**

For some people, the thought of instant coffee seems cheap, rushed and a bit tacky. However, if done correctly, instant coffee can be a half decent drink for a non-picky coffee drinker.

Available in most stores, instant coffee consists of deeply grounded coffee beans that are soluble in hot water. To heat the water, I recommend utilizing a tea kettle or brewing hot water through your coffee device. Once the water is ready to go, pour it into the grounded coffee beans. Viola – your coffee is ready to go!



\$10 - \$15 (PRICES)

### **The Good**

- ✓ Quick & easy
- ✓ Cheap to buy
- ✓ Won't waste too much coffee because it's usually made for one cup

### **The Bad**

- ✗ Can taste extremely strong and bitter
- ✗ A lot of trial and error before finding the perfect coffee grounds to water ratio for a cup of coffee
- ✗ Would not serve to a large group of people or visitors (seems rushed & a bit tacky)
- ✗ Second heating source required for the water

**Skilled Barista Level:** Low

---

## **Final Thoughts**

We have covered quite a lot of blends throughout this piece. One thing is for sure, don't ever think that there isn't a type of brew that would fit your tastes. While some like it quick and easy to use, others prefer a more hand crafted brew that takes more time and understanding of the coffee makeup. Whatever your inner barista longs for, that is what you should try in your brewing endeavors.

To make the best cup of coffee you have to find the right coffee blend for you. It may take some time, and some trial and error on your part to figure out the brew that will work for you. In the end, I hope you find that perfect fit because creating the best cup of coffee (and your sanity) depends on it.

Happy coffee brewing!!