

Espresso coffee

What really is an espresso? Essentially, espresso coffee is made by expressing 1.5 fluid ounces (44 ml) of nearly boiling water under pressure through 7 grams of finely ground coffee beans in a timeframe of about 15-20 seconds. So espresso is both a coffee beverage and a brewing method (a way to make coffee).



Because of the pressurized brewing process, the flavors and chemicals in a typical cup of espresso are very concentrated. When you put grounded beans under pressure, the flavor profile becomes more intense. You could compare it with the difference between a blueberry tea and a spoonful of blueberry jam. It is thicker than coffee brewed by other methods and has a higher concentration of suspended and dissolved solids. Also, a foam with a creamy consistency has formed on top (the so called crema).

Some people have strange ideas about espressos so let's do away with a few general misconceptions (although there will always be people who will disagree and want to keep thinking espressos are only the Italian's province).

It is not a specific bean or bean blend

Any bean can be used to produce authentic espressos. Labeling beans as espresso (or drip for that) is nothing more than a recommendation from the roaster on how to best bring out the flavor of the beans.

Many find that single origin beans are more difficult to brew as espresso. Single origins typically have more delicate flavors, which makes it easy to under or over extract making them often difficult to brew with for espresso. It's not impossible, but it will take a bit more time and dedication. While it might require some finessing to dial-in a single origin for espresso, I think the reward is well worth the effort.

Any combination of beans can be used to produce authentic espresso. Normal brewed coffee tends to produce less intense flavors than espresso making it more forgiving when used to brew a variety of coffee qualities. You may also find that brewed coffee is a bit easier to control the extraction and therefore the flavor of the cup you produce.

There are some people suggesting that all espresso coffee should be blends, made up from several origin coffees. Sometimes it is even suggested that one of the blends should always be a Robusta coffee. Well, I think that's just a case of personal preferences and that there aren't really any rules about which coffee to pick for a good espresso

It does not need a specific roast level

Any roasting level can be used to produce authentic espressos. So, how did the idea about special, dark or even double dark roast espresso roasts come into being? Coffee has always enjoyed ever growing amounts of fans worldwide but especially in the last 50 years, with ever better communication and transportation methods, it is easier to track and control quality, even at farm level. Formerly, and in an effort to create a consistent flavor profile, roasters would prefer to use a darker roast to produce smoky, caramelized sugar notes, like we see in an Italian roasts and that we normally connect with espressos. Roasting this way means suppressing the nuanced flavors and they were no longer detectable. Nowadays however roasters can find guaranteed flows of high-quality beans to make this method of masking taste not necessary.

This means that any coffee can now be used, roasted and experimented with to make a real (and good tasting) espresso.



[Mike Marquez](https://unsplash.com/@mensroom?utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=photographer-credit&utm_content=creditBadge)

Is this an open invitation to experiment with all kinds of beans, blends and toasting levels? It definitely is! You might surprise yourself (and your friends) with the results!

It does not mean a significantly higher intake level of caffeine

Now this is only relatively true of course, because an espresso has more caffeine per unit volume than most other coffee beverages. However, because the usual serving size is much smaller, the total caffeine content is *less than a cup of standard brewed coffee*: the caffeine content of a cup of espresso is about 150 mg versus about 175 mg in a normal cup of coffee.

So if you want to slow down on your coffee and caffeine intake, you better take an espresso!