

Making a good cup of coffee

You don't need to be a cupper or "barista" to make and serve a good cup of coffee. Today we will look into the *process* of making a good cup of coffee (later we will see how to choose the beans). I will provide you with some tips that should be easy to follow and could potentially improve the quality of the cup of coffee you make quite a lot.

Let's start with *water*. It represents 98% of a brewed coffee's volume and it is very important for a good cup of coffee. Fresh, cold water, free of impurities is a requisite. Some mineral content in the water is actually desirable, but distilled or softened water should be avoided as they will not adequately extract the flavor from the grounded beans.

A good cup of coffee requires *freshness*. Only beans that have been freshly ground, brewed, and consumed can satisfy a demanding coffee lover. Brewed coffee should not be on a warming element any longer than 20 minutes. After that it's best to transfer the coffee to an insulated thermo, but even then, not for over one hour.

The *temperature* of the water when brewing actually is more important than you would think. If you are not making some espresso, the optimum temperature is around 80-85 degrees Celsius or 195-205° Fahrenheit (so it is not boiling!). This is the best temperature to pull a coffee's complete range of flavors into the brew. A "just off the boil"-temperature is necessary for a good cup of coffee because the boiling water actually kills some of the taste and flavor. If you use an electric drip brewer you would need to check the manual to be sure it meets this requirement. If you brew it manually, this makes it a lot easier because you need only bring fresh, cold water to a boil then remove it for a moment. Do not just tosh it on the coffee, take your time and let it drip easily.

Toasting your own coffee would be the best but that is not something easily done. *Grinding* (grounding or milling) your own coffee however can be easily done by everyone and it really is important for making a good cup of coffee. As with brewing correctly, it has everything to do with timing. To get the best quality from whole bean coffee, you should only grind the amount you intend to brew. Coffee's primary enemies are oxygen, light and moisture. When a coffee bean is ground, its surface area increases dramatically and oxygen, light and moisture start degrading its better qualities.



Choosing the correct grind depends on the brewing method. The longer the time your coffee will be in contact with water during brewing, the coarser the grind should be. A grind that is too coarse for the brewing method used yields weak, under-extracted coffee. Too fine a grind, on the other hand, produces an over-extracted, bitter cup. For your everyday coffee I would say that you should use a medium grind for drip coffee and a fine grind for vacuum pots and drip coffee using cone filters.



Now most if this might be known, but a less known mistake a lot of people make is with the ratio of coffee grounds to water used. The recommended proportion is two tablespoons of coffee for every 6 ounces of water (more or less a 16:1 water to coffee weight proportion). Using this ratio could make a significant difference in your cup quality. When too much water is used, only the undesirable flavors remain to be pulled into the brew since the “heart” of the coffee has already been extracted. Consequently, excess water produces a bitter, inferior cup. Using less water results in a stronger cup, but doesn’t extract all the flavors. If you find the coffee too strong with this ratio, simply dilute the brewed coffee with fresh, hot water later because the importance of this ratio lies in the extraction process. Using the correct ratio guarantees the optimum extraction of the characteristics we are looking for in a good cup of coffee!

You can find more info about measures here <https://blackbearcoffee.com/resources/83>