MARCELLO'S

COFFEE - CULTURE - EMOTION

"Your Barista in a Capsule"

Frequently Asked Questions

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What does ‘espresso’ mean?

Espresso is 7 g of dark roasted, finely ground, densely compressed coffee through which 98° C hot water is forced with high pressure within 25 to 30 seconds. The resulting dark liquid is dense and syrup like in texture, with a caramel to hazelnut colored, finely textured ‘crema’ which stays compact even when sugar is added.

Espresso is also the name of this particular brewing method.

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What is ‘crema’?

The ‘crema’ is produced by emulsifying the oils in the ground coffee into a colloid which only occurs in the espresso brewing method.

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Is espresso stronger than regular drip coffee?

Due to the quick extraction (short contact of water with the coffee), the aromatic parts of coffee, the flavourful coffee oils, are extracted in a higher ratio than the caffeine. The darker roast is another reason for the comparably lower caffeine content (as compared to coffee obtained with other brewing methods).

Espresso is full of the beneficial aspects of coffee and - despite it's intense flavour - much lighter and healthier than drip coffee. One more reason is that espresso is consumed in small quantities and therefore in much more moderation than e.g. drip coffee.

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What is the difference between espresso and cappuccino?

Espresso is the key ingredient of any of today's fashionable coffee-based drinks such as cappuccino, latte macchiato. Cappuccino e.g. is espresso topped with frothed milk.

The quality of the key ingredient, the espresso coffee, determines the quality of the whole espresso-based drink: great espresso results in a great cappuccino, poor espresso with a sour after taste results in an equally poor cappuccino although it is a bit less noticeable.

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How can I recognize a good espresso?

The first impression
The color of the crema shows the caramelized natural sugars of the espresso bean. Ideally the crema should be of a hazel color with shimmers of red irregular stripes. The crema should be three to four millimeters thick. It should not include any big bubbles and last a minimum of three minutes without breaking up or decomposing.
If the crema is light and thin, contains big bubbles and disappears quickly, it is a sign of insufficient use of the espresso grind. If the crema is dark brown or black with a white spot, or is too thin with the tendency to form a black hole in the middle, the espresso grind has been exhausted.

The consistency
Espresso is generally thicker than coffee brewed by other methods. The consistency should be almost sirupy.

The aroma
The espresso flavor consists of many different substances. After the extraction of the shot(, the aroma should be intense but pleasant and slightly sweet. The espresso should not taste burned or wooden, smell musky or like tobacco.
A touch of hazelnut can develop when a blend with a high Arabica percentage is used. An unclear, weak smell or the lack of a smell are signs of poor use of the espresso. A biting, sour taste or too dominant smell means the espresso has been exhausted.

The taste
A perfect espresso needs no sugar but sugar can complete it. The taste of the espresso should be perfectly balanced between sweet and bitter. It should never taste sour neither burnt or leave a bitter aftertaste. A watery tasting espresso without the needed density is normally due to badly brewed espresso.

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How ‘long’ must an espresso be?

Espresso means 25-30 ml of liquid.

When the amount of water is increased or decreased relative to a normal shot, the composition of the shot changes, because not all components of coffee dissolve at the same rate. This is why an excessively long or short shot will not contain the same ratio of components like a normal shot. Therefore, a 'ristretto' (short shot) is not simply twice as strong as a regular shot, nor is a 'lungo' (long shot) simply half the strength. They will decidedly differ in taste.

A 'lungo' is more bitter, because the additional hot water passing through the ground coffee extracts components that would normally remain undissolved. The more water is passed through the coffee grounds, the more bitter and watery the shot tastes. Moreover, since espresso is brewed under pressure, a 'lungo' does not have the same taste or composition as coffee produced by other methods, even when made with the same ratio of water and ground coffee.

Conclusion:
An espresso machine is specifically engineered to make espresso. For best results in your cup, be it a pure single espresso or an espresso-based drink like cappuccino, stay with the recommended classic quantity (even if on first sight you think it’s not enough liquid).

For coffee beverages with lot's of coffee liquid there are other brewing methods like e.g. french press or drip coffee. Despite being produced with the same raw materials, the result of course is a totally different kind of beverage.

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What is the correct way to drink coffee?

There is no right or wrong way to drink coffee.

Coffee comes in many different variations. Depending on the brewing method you can obtain very different beverages: a drip coffee e.g. tastes totally different than an espresso coffee, has a different consistency, and different nutritional properties.

Which type of coffee you drink, how you drink your coffee (with or without sugar, with or without milk, hot or cold) is entirely up to your individual taste.

Marcello's is promoting coffee in the Italian/Neapolitan tradition. This is why we exclusively offer machines and coffee to produce espresso.

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Do you need special water to prepare espresso coffee?

Water is the main ingredient of espresso besides the ground coffee beans and therefore one of the five key factors that influence the quality and taste.

The quality of the water used is thus very important for the preparation of a good espresso. It is important not to use hard water, so the taste and the aroma of the ground beans can fully unfold. The water hardness varies from region to region, depending on the potassium salts solved in it.

Besides the influence on the taste, there is also another reason why you should not use hard water: Limescale can cause crust formation in the pipes and the boiler and thus cause slow water flow. Limescale blockage can also cause a reduction in temperature of the outflowing water and thus affect the outcome of the espresso. Limescale also increases maintenance costs and reduces the life of your machine.

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Why should I make an espresso with a capsule instead of freshly-ground whole-bean coffee?

If you want **consistent quality** in every shot of espresso, you must opt for the capsule.

The Italian espresso tradition requires five different elements for the perfect espresso:
water quality, coffee blend, grinder, machine, human being ("la mano", "the hand").

When using a filter, water quality can be kept consistent. The coffee blend is a matter of choice (you can buy capsules with high or poor quality coffee and different roasts and blends just as you can with beans).

The first challenge are the roasted coffee beans. Even though the roasted beans are enclosed in vacuum or valve packages and do not lose their characteristics for many months, they are, however, at their best within the first 3–4 weeks. Coffee beans lose their aroma very quickly when exposed to air. Therefore the packaging should only be opened just before filling it into the grinder. Never the less, once in the grinder they are inevitably exposed to oxygen and start getting stale. Because more taste is lost more quickly when the beans are ground, you should only grind as much as you need - which makes you lose time in a busy environment.

As for the capsules, we import only small quantities of freshly roasted coffee. So the coffee we supply is always as fresh as it can be short of roasting it yourself. The capsules containing the ground coffee are single-packaged in protective atmosphere and therefore not exposed to air. And they are opened only the very moment they are being used to pull a shot of espresso.

When using whole-bean coffee, the grinder is the second challenge: The setting of the grinder is extremely important, since it can alter the size of the grind. If the beans have been ground too coarsely, the water will flow through the grind too quickly and not all the desired aromatic parts will have been extracted. The result is a thin espresso that is poor in aroma. If the grind is too fine, however, the water will run through the coffee too slowly and the espresso will taste wooden and bitter. Endless factors, such as humidity, air pressure and air quality, and blend and roast temperature of the beans are of such high importance to the outcome of the grind that there is not “the” right grind setting. The ideal grind setting is achieved when it takes 20 – 30 seconds to pull a single espresso shot. The grinder needs to be readjusted when getting out of calibration, when the coffee blend is changed, or when environmental conditions change. To achieve the right grind quickly without endless trial and error, you need a very experienced barista.

As the ground coffee is in direct contact with the machine, there are more factors that need to be set right than with capsules. Among other factors, the machine has to be kept clean of any coffee residues as oils and other substances left in the machine will inevitably influence the taste and quality of the espresso. The same is true for the portafilter and the filter basket. In capsule machines, there is no contact between machine and coffee grind resulting in an always clean machine (which is an asset in terms of food hygiene as well).

And then there is the human factor: no two persons will make exactly the same coffee even when given the exactly same equipment and material. It’s about the proper cleaning of the filters, measuring the exact quantity, seeing and adjusting the coarseness of the grind, the right pressure of tamping, the flushing of the machine and filters, the insertion of the portafilter (inserting it too loose of too tight also results in an inferior beverage). It is “only” making a coffee - but to pull a perfect espresso in a consistent quality and under pressure (the customers are waiting) is an art that takes years of experience*. To find, pay, and keep a professional barista on the required level is asking a lot.
With the capsule the human factor is virtually eliminated: The grind is always right, the quantity of coffee grind is precision measured, the tamping (compacting of the coffee grind) is taken care of, there is no way to insert the capsule too loose or too tight.

**Rumor has it that in Napoli, Italy’s most traditional and renowned place for espresso, a barista is required to train for 10 years by making espressos used in cappuccinos before he is allowed to pull shots served as pure espresso.*

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Is individually portioned coffee not too expensive in a commercial environment given the price of a capsule compared to the price of coffee beans?

If you compare the price based on a gram of coffee only, this in fact may lead to that conclusion. An individually portioned coffee, however, is much more than just the coffee grind it holds. Inside the capsule there is also equipment and a professional barista:

- there is no need to buy, maintain, and adjust a grinder
- you can offer your customers various types of blends without cluttering your bar area with numerous grinders
- there is no wasted coffee due to grinder adjustment
- there is no wasted coffee grind due to spilling or overfilling the filter basket

- no spilling of coffee grind means cost savings and automatically achieved higher hygienic standards as no coffee grind can get stuck in or under the machine and the work area
- there is no degradation of the aroma of the coffee beans as the portions are single packed and sealed in protective atmosphere
- the coffee machines are practically maintenance free
- there is no need to heat the whole machine all the time even on off-peak hours. The machines are modular, i.e. the single brew groups can be switched on and off as needed depending on customer traffic therefore saving on energy costs
- there is no need for the cleaning of the portafilter before pulling a shot
- the grind, the quantity, and the tamping of the coffee are done professionally, and are the same in every dose of coffee
- there is a superior standard in food hygiene as every portion is single packed and sealed and only opened upon use, there is no contact between machine and coffee, and there is no spilling of coffee grind.

So in fact individually portioned coffee packed in Espresso Point® system capsules replaces the grinder, saves on the coffee machine, ensures food hygiene standards, and eliminates the human factor by actually replacing a professional barista and as a bonus guarantees a consistently high-quality espresso. Now given all the savings (especially on barista salary and the trouble and cost of periodically replacing a barista), **individually portioned coffee done with the right professional equipment is actually saving money with each espresso or espresso-based drink served.**

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What is the difference between Nespresso® and Espresso Point® system capsules?

The Quantity of Coffee

There is about 40% more coffee in an Espresso Point® system capsule compared to the classic Nespresso® capsule and pod.

The Extraction Process

The coffee is extracted in the traditional and typical espresso method by forcing water with high pressure through densely compacted ground coffee. The capsule acts as the portafilter and basket. The “crema” is produced by emulsifying the aromatic oils in the ground coffee into a colloid, and not by adding air.

The Result

The amount of coffee used and the extraction process applied with the Espresso Point® system result in an almost black beverage with a slightly thicker consistency, a dense crema without noticeable bubbles, and a distinct, clean and crisp smell of fresh coffee.

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