



Making the Perfect Cup of Coffee at Home...

There is nothing like the smell of fresh ground coffee. The question is; “*How can something that smells so good, taste so bad?*” The answer is simple: It hasn’t been brewed correctly. I promise that if you follow the steps below, the quality of the coffee in your cup will soar! Let’s get to it.

There are many brewing methods available, but here we will focus on the optimal brewing method for an auto-drip coffee maker, the one you probably have on your counter this very minute.

The Components: There are six main ingredients when it comes to brewing a great cup of coffee, they are:

1. Beans
2. Water
3. Grind
4. Equipment/Temperature
5. Brewing Ratio
6. Cleanliness

Beans: Since coffee beans are actually the seeds of a berry-like fruit, it is important to keep in mind that they will go stale just like any other perishable food in your home. To make sure you are getting a fresh, high quality coffee, buy whole beans from a local café or roaster. Be sure to check the roast date. Optimally, coffee should be ground and brewed within 7-10 days of roasting. After that, the coffee loses much of its “spark”, resulting in a flat tasting cup. Whole beans store better than ground beans as there is less contact surface for air and water to penetrate. Always store your coffee in a cool, dry place in an airtight container.

Water: Starting with only COLD, filtered water is IMPERATIVE to brewing a great cup of coffee. For home brewing, your best bet would be to either use a tap water filter, or purchase a Brita-type pitcher and keep it full in the refrigerator. Bottled spring water is also a good option.

Equipment: As the popularity of specialty coffee has grown (pun intended), equipment manufacturers have begun implementing some of the same technology used in professional equipment into entry-level brewers. The important factors to consider when purchasing a brewer are brew temperature and contact time. Optimally, a pot of coffee should ONLY be brewed using water that is heated between 195-205 degrees Fahrenheit, in a period of no more than three minutes. You can find a good brewer at most major retailers for around \$50-\$90.

Grind: Here is the Achilles heel for most of us who brew at home. You can take great care to purchase the freshest beans, buy a high-end brewer, use the purest water, but still brew terrible coffee because the beans were ground improperly. Fortunately, burr grinders, like the ones used in my cafes, are available in home models. The major difference between a burr grinder and a rotary blade grinder is that the burr grinder can be set to produce a consistent grind, whereas the rotary blade grinder involves guesswork every time. The downfall to the burr grinder is price: entry-level burr grinders start at \$55. Regardless of which type you choose, grind the coffee to a slightly sandy texture when using an auto drip coffee maker. Remember, a grind that is too fine will produce a bitter cup, while one too course will result in a weak, watery brew.

Brewing Ratio: Professional coffee tasters recommend a standard ratio of two tablespoons of coffee for each 6 ounces of water. This may seem like a lot of coffee at first glance, but it has been proven to be essential for a full-flavored cup. Here is where you can experiment to brew coffee that matches your palette.

Cleanliness: When it comes to brewing coffee, the cleaner the better! Oils from brewed coffee, if left unchecked, will not only harm the flavor of your coffee, but can also damage your machine as well. Routinely clean the spray head (where the water drips onto the grounds), the brew basket, and your carafe. There are several products in the marketplace that are made specifically for cleaning coffee machines and parts. A small investment in one of these cleaners will bring you a long way toward your goal of “the perfect cup”.

The Final Word!

There are many ways to brew a bad cup of coffee, but only ONE way to get the perfect cup. By following the recipe outlined here, I guarantee you’ll be well on your way to consistently brewing a superior cup of coffee every time.

For a TRULY perfect cup, you can stop by BeanTowne Coffee House & Café in Hampstead, NH! Opening in November, BeanTowne will be one of only a handful of nationally recognized cafes in the country that are using the “Gold Cup” standard to brew coffee.

For more on “The Gold Cup”, go to the Specialty Coffee Association’s website at www.scaa.org