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Be A Specialty Coffee Specialist

By Linda Johnson

You've decided to switch to specialty coffee. You've made a bold move to enter the realm of the tastiest, freshest coffee around. Specialty coffee typically has gone from the roaster to your cup as fast as humanly possible. After all, coffee is a perishable and delicate commodity. Its peak taste has a very short life span. It will weaken with time, air exposure, and exposure to moisture. Speed in the entire coffee process, from when the beans were picked right up to when your machine brews your pot, is essential.

Because specialty coffee is an especially perishable item with a very limited shelf life, try to keep it as fresh as possible when you get it home. Store it in airtight containers or in a sealed coffee bag like the kind from the supermarket or gourmet store where you bought the coffee. Heat, light, air and moisture can all diminish your coffee's flavor. That's because all of these factors speed up the release of the coffee's aromatic gases over time. Refrigerating or freezing the coffee may slow this process, but only if the coffee has not yet been exposed to air. Opened coffee that is later frozen will build up condensation from the moisture in the air, and the coffee will end up tasting worse than if it had not been frozen at all.

Also, make certain to grind your specialty coffee immediately before brewing. Coffee beans are like little containers that store the coffee oils and aromatic compounds. The flavor is exposed to air and moisture once a bean is ground. If brewing doesn't occur right away, the precious flavor and aroma can be lost. In other words, grinding coffee at home is the second most important step to getting the most out of your coffee.

The third step is knowing exactly how long a time to allow your specialty coffee to brew. If you let water contact the grounds for too long, your coffee would end with an excessively bitter flavor. In contrast, if you let water contact the grounds for too short a time, your coffee may not reach its full flavor potential.

The final step in delicious specialty coffee brewing comes after your coffee is finished brewing. Don't allow your coffee to sit on a burner or hotplate too long afterward. Any longer than 20 minutes is too long because the coffee's taste would start to become bitter. Your taste buds, and your stomach, will appreciate it.

Linda Johnson contributes to several online magazines, including

<http://products-resources.com>

and

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Simple Gourmet Coffee

By Dana Goldberg

There are a number of countries that produce coffee and new regions are converting their crops to the mighty bean as our demand for different tasting coffee increases. We are also adding more exotic flavourings to our coffee. It comes as no surprise that the number of coffee shops and stores that sell coffee beans and all the associated paraphernalia to be able to make our own perfect coffee at home.

Coffee houses are a great place for us to go and relax with friends and family over an expertly made cup of coffee. We often ignore how much effort has been put into our drink by the coffee maker that roasts the beans, grinds them up and then uses the exact quantity required to brew a satisfying cup of coffee for us. There are a number of techniques involved in making a cup of coffee and a lot of us are happy to leave someone else to make it for us. The equipment used is only part of the story; you also need to practice with various quantities of coffee and water until it reaches your optimum strength.

We are almost overwhelmed by the huge variety of types of coffee that are available. Not only does the coffee taste different depending on the country and region that the beans were grown in but also from year to year. This is due to the changes in weather from one coffee growing season to another.

If you go to a specialist coffee shop you are likely to be confronted with a huge selection of flavourings that you can add to your coffee to make it even more to your liking.

The strength and bitterness of the coffee can be adjusted by using different quantities of water and coffee, adding sweeteners and milk as well as adding milk. One tip for lowering the bitterness level is to never use boiling water as this scalds the coffee and gives it a bitter taste. Always use water that is just below boiling temperature when making your coffee.

Everyone has their own opinion about what makes the perfect cup of coffee but you will find your own technique through trial and error.

D. Goldberg is editor of The Gourmet Blog. The Gourmet Blog offers gourmet food recipes, gourmet gift ideas and other gourmet tips.

<http://www.thegourmetblog.com>



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