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How To Select A Coffee Roaster

By Carol Finch

If you have decided to roast your own coffee then your first port of call will be to consider how to select a coffee roaster that is right for you. This decision is probably one of the hardest coffee-related choices you'll have to make - there's nothing worse than buying the wrong kind of roaster for your needs.

We're going to be primarily looking at automated custom coffee bean roasters for the purposes of this article. But, it's worth noting that you can roast your own coffee beans fresh at home without having to buy a roasting machine.

It is possible to roast beans in or on the stove, on a barbeque or fire or even, sometimes, in a popcorn popper. But, if you take your home roasting seriously and want some help with the process (the do it yourself approach can take a lot more time and effort) then a proper roasting machine may be your best option.

So, why do people roast their own beans at home? Well, it's basically all about freshness and the quality of the roast you will ultimately get. If you buy green coffee beans - i.e. beans that are unroasted - you can simply roast them at home when you need to use them in batches so they'll be ultra fresh. Green coffee beans are cheaper and last longer than ready roasted beans into the bargain. By the way, more information on bean roasting can be found here:

<http://www.coffee-n-beans.com/roasters.html>

The ability to roast your own beans is a desirable must with many coffee aficionados - you can do away with stale coffee, get the level of roast you want when and where you want it and save yourself some money into the bargain!

In very simple terms there are two main types of machine to consider when you're deciding how to select a coffee roaster which are Fluid Bed/Air Roasters and Drum Roasters.

Fluid Bed/Air Roasters

How To Select A Coffee Roaster

If you want to roast your own coffee beans at home then the first thing you should look at is getting hold of a standard fluid bed based roaster. These machines are small, can be compact and are primarily designed for small-medium home use. So, they will roast your beans for you fairly quickly and with minimal fuss - you don't have to stand over them for example, as you would if you were home roasting on the stove top.

These kinds of roasters kind of work like popcorn makers in that they use hot air during the roast process. You can see how the roast is progressing in most cases so you can control it more effectively and you will sometimes also be given pre-set roasts to choose from in any case. If you're a home roasting `newbie' then this kind of machine may suit you best as you will get a feel for the whole process as you go along - you can always upgrade to a bigger and more complex roaster at a later date when you have more experience. These machines are also cheaper than other options and are relatively easy to use in the kitchen.

There are a couple of downsides with this kind of roaster, however. You will find that some models won't roast that much coffee at once and will burn out if you use them too often. Some models also don't have such great controls or pre-sets (some don't have any) - so it may take a while for you to get used to using the machine if this is the case.

Drum Roaster

If the option of a fluid bed roaster doesn't seem quite right to you when you're thinking about how to select a coffee roaster then you could also look at drum roasting as an alternative. Drum roasters were once only seen in coffee shops and stores that roasted their own coffee beans but, nowadays, it's real easy to buy machines for domestic use.

Drum roasting machines can basically roast more beans at once - in most cases - than fluid bed machines as they are bigger. Most will work on a convection or conduction method. With this kind of machine you place your beans in a drum, close it up, set it running and wait until the roast is done.

This is more of a pro machine - although they are designed for use at home - simply because they can be more complex to operate than fluid bed roasters. But, the majority of true coffee fans will prefer this method over time as it is held to produce better results in coffee taste terms.

The downsides with many drum roasters is that they don't have a window so you can't always look inside them as you can with most fluid bed roasters. So, you may have to rely on your sense of smell or hearing (as you listen to the coffee bean cracks!) to work out when your roast is perfectly done. This is one of the reasons why these machines may not suit `newbie' roasters to start off with.

Some of these drum machines can also give off a lot of smoke so you may need to sort out adequate ventilation or even do your roasting outside if this is the case. And, as you might expect you'll pay more for drum roasters than for fluid bed machines. At the end of the day you'll need to think long and hard about how confident you are with the home roasting process - if you haven't roasted at home before then you may be better off starting off with a fluid bed machine but if you feel more confident and need the extra functionality then a drum roaster may suit you better.

How To Select A Coffee Roaster

Whichever type of machine you choose to buy do remember that it's absolutely vital to read some user reviews on the Internet before you buy a roaster as these will tell you stuff the manufacturer won't. These reviews are written by people who have used these machines and they will give you a real good idea of the pros and cons of any machine from people that have used them regularly.

Some example tips to look out with for fluid bed roasters include:

- How well do the programs (if there are any) work? – How easy is it to use and what kind of functions does it have? – How well made is the roaster? – How evenly does it roast? – How well can you see into the roasting chamber? – How noisy is the machine? – How easy is it to clean the machine/parts? – What happens to the chaff?

Some example tips to look out with for drum roasters include:

- How well do the programs (if there are any) work? – How easy is it to use and what kind of functions does it have? – Does it produce a lot of smoke? – Can you see inside the drum from the outside? – Does the machine get too hot? – What happens to the chaff? – How easy is it to clean the

machine/parts?

Carol Finch enjoys writing about espresso machines, organic beans, and more over at Coffee N' Beans:

<http://www.coffee-n-beans.com>

Coffee Roaster Machines – Java on Demand!

By Jocelyn Meadows

Most coffee lovers have a strong liking to freshly brewed coffee. They are not very fond of instant coffee and sometimes may even consider it demeaning to have coffee right out of the can. They will either grind their coffee and stir a cuppa or have one of the new fancy coffee roaster machines which promise a quick fix from the bean to the cup in a few minutes without losing the authentic flavour of the coffee.

These coffee roaster machines have become quite popular in the recent past. They provide café style coffee and are quite economical to maintain. Some of the key things you should look out while buying a coffee roaster machine for your personal use is the whether it suits your requirements or not. The first concern will be the size of the machine. If you have a small kitchen, you will need to pick up a compact piece and if you have a good sized kitchen then you can pick up a larger machine which has a higher capacity.

Apart from capacity, you also need to see what the accessories available with the coffee machine are.

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Accessories can make or break the coffee drinking experience and cappuccino lovers will agree that a frother (a pipe which passes steam which creates the froth in the coffee) is as essential as an in-built bean crusher. Apart from that you need to check if there is a condiments tray and if the coffee roaster machine comes with cups or not.

All the above are relevant with one main deciding factor when buying roaster coffee machines: the budget. Since there is a wide range of pricing to consider, it is advisable that you set up a ball park figure for the coffee machine as they can range from anywhere between \$200 to \$1500!

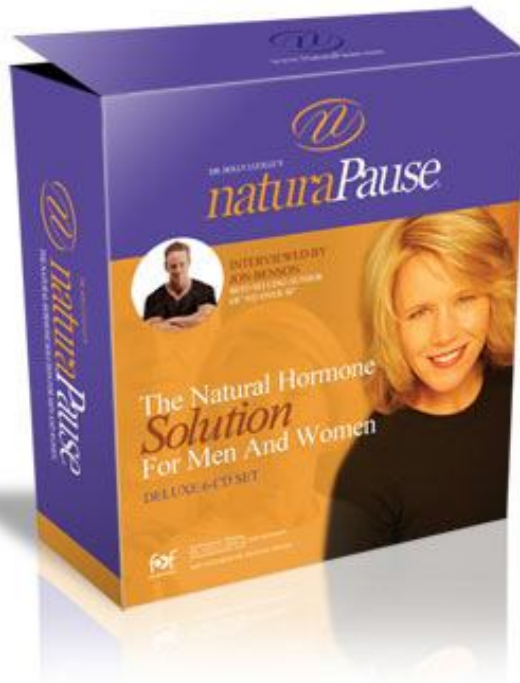
Jocelyn Meadows is an avid coffee enthusiast. Check out her recommendations for the

best coffee

makers

and read about

commercial coffee makers



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