

FOOD TIME

How to improve the quality of your everyday coffee

By: Tim Wendelboe, Photo: Tim Wendelboe
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Coffee is one of the most consumed beverages in the world, yet I believe that more than 95% of the coffee served around the world is of poor quality. We are heading towards a society where everything needs to be simple. Therefore the coffee market is flooded with machines and solutions that will make you believe that you can make a "perfect cup of coffee" just by pushing a button. I can honestly say that most of these solutions are more about design and comfort than it is about taste, but if it is easy you want, poor tasting coffee is the price you have to pay. Making good coffee has always been simple, but you need a little bit of time and also you need to know what to do. Following is a small guide on how to improve the taste of your everyday cup of Joe.

Buying coffee

Let's start with the ingredients for great coffee. Before coffee is roasted it is actually green. This is because the beans are seeds in the berry of a coffee tree.

Coffee is a natural produce that has huge variations in terms of quality, just like you can find good or rotten apples, you can find fully ripe coffee cherries with a lot of aroma and sweetness and you can harvest unripe or even rotten coffee cherries. The problem is that both good and rotten qualities are sold on the market, because in the end the consumer does not see the condition of the picked coffee cherry, but only brown roasted ground coffee or even only the brown extract from the beans. But believe me, coffee made on beans from rotten cherries tastes disgusting.



Finding good coffee can be difficult, but look for coffee where the content is traceable to a coffee farm rather than a bag that is labelled "100% Arabica" or "Colombian coffee." (**You wouldn't buy a bottle of wine that only said "French wine" would you?**) There is a lot of work behind producing good coffee, so don't look for the cheapest one if you want the best taste.

Roasted coffee is a fresh produce, like baked bread or milk. Therefore it is essential to get hold of fresh coffee beans. Look for the roast date on the coffee bag, not the expiration date, as expiration dates normally is set for 6 to 12 months, which is absolutely too long for any coffee. Try to find a local roaster and buy freshly roasted beans. If the beans have an intense smell of baked bread, then they are most likely fresh. Roasted coffee stays fresh for about 4 weeks after roast date if it is packed in a sealed bag as whole bean coffee. If you have to store coffee, keep it in the original bag, in an airtight container at room temperature. Oxygen, light, heat and moisture are coffee's worst enemies.

Water:

Over 98% of a cup of coffee is actually water. If the water quality is poor, then the taste of the coffee will be poor too. If the water tastes like chlorine or bad in any way, then filter the water with a charcoal filter. If you have high calcium content in your water I recommend using treated water or even bottled water for making coffee. Believe me, it makes a huge difference. Always make sure the water



Tim Wendelboe is a man, a coffee roastery, an espresso bar and a coffee resource and training centre located in Norway (soon to open as webshop).

www.timwendelboe.no

Our goal is to be among the best coffee roasteries and espresso bars in the world and to be a preferred supplier of quality coffee and a preferred resource for coffee innovation and coffee knowledge.

The achievements of Tim Wendelboe:

- # Nordic Roaster 2008
- # 9th place in the World Barista Championship 2008, Chris Kolbu
- # Norwegian Barista Champion 2008, Chris Kolbu
- # World Cup Tasting Champion 2005, Tim Wendelboe
- # World Barista Champion 2004, Tim Wendelboe
- # 2nd place in the World Barista Championship 2002, Tim Wendelboe
- # Norwegian Barista Champion 2002, Tim Wendelboe
- # 2nd place in the World Barista Championship 2001, Tim Wendelboe
- # Norwegian Barista Champion 2001, Tim Wendelboe
- # 2nd place in the Norwegian Barista Championship 2000, Tim Wendelboe

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temperature is between 92°C and 96°C during brewing. This means pouring the water from the kettle as it is boiling, as you will see the temperature drop a little as you pour the water.

Grinding coffee:

Once coffee is ground, the shelf life reduces to 1-2 days for filter ground coffee or 2-5 minutes for espresso ground coffee. Having a good coffee grinder is as important as having a wine bottle opener if you like to drink wine. (You don't get the wine bottle opened in the wine store do you?) It is very easy to over extract the coffee during brewing if the grind is set too fine leading to very bitter tastes. If the grind is set too coarse, you will get a watery and bitter flavour in the cup. The rule of thumb here is to grind coarser for brewing methods where water and coffee have 4-5 minutes of contact time. For shorter brewing times like espresso (20 – 30 seconds) a very fine grind is needed. A good coffee grinder can be adjusted to different grind settings. The small cylindrical grinder with 2 blades spinning around like in a food processor creates a very uneven grind and is best suited to chop nuts for cakes.

Tools:

Brewing good coffee can be done easily on a French press / plunger, a good filter brewing machine or even in just a water kettle. Whatever tool it is, it is important to keep it clean and to use the right measurements of water, coffee and extraction times in order to get the best results. Sometimes it is actually useful to read the instructions for the various brewing devices.



Correct measurements:

Making good coffee is more of a craft than it is an art. Precision is therefore key to getting consistent results. Buying a digital food scale and a good measurement tool for water is all you need with a little bit of mathematical skills (or a calculator.) I normally recommend using 60 to 70 grams of coffee per litre of water on brewing methods like filter brewers, French press brewers, percolators and vacuum pots, etc. When making espresso I recommend using 8 to 10 grams of coffee per 30 ml of espresso. If this sounds incorrect to you, then at least try to vary the grams a little and compare the taste. Every coffee and brewing device needs different measurements but what matters in the end is that you enjoy the flavours in the cup. Remember also to use a timer if you are brewing on manual brewers like the French press. I recommend 4-5 minutes steeping time before you plunge on a French press.

Think fresh:

It is important to think fresh all the time. The coffee has to be freshly roasted, freshly ground, made as close to consumption as possible and not stored for more than 30 minutes after brewing before serving. It is of course best to serve the coffee immediately after brewing due to development of acids and constant loss of volatile aromas in the finished brew. If you have to store the brewed coffee, then use airtight thermoses for best storage. Coffee should be stored at a temperature near 80°C.

Enjoy:

Many people drink coffee from very large mugs with straight walls. Taste wise this is like drinking wine straight from the bottle. I personally enjoy my coffee best from cups that are quite wide so that the liquid spreads better in my mouth and creates a better balance in the taste. The wider shape will also let my nose get in to the cup so I can smell all the aromas. Well-prepared coffee should display a lot of aroma, sweetness and good balance and mouthfeel. Therefore, the use of sugar and milk is totally unnecessary. The best way to know if you have succeeded or not in making a good cup of coffee is of course to taste the coffee itself. If you let your taste buds guide you will most likely become a better coffee maker and a better taster eventually. So, *don't be afraid to experiment, but remember; taste is*

Menu planning

St.Lucia

Taste of Africa

Kürbis suppe - Pumpkin soup

The King Bolete

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