

COFFEE DISTRIBUTORS LTD

An Introduction to Espresso Coffee

Espresso coffee is a concentrated coffee beverage that is produced by forcing highly pressurized hot water through finely ground coffee beans. The resulting drink is of a thicker consistency and effectively more concentrated flavour than other brewing methods (such as Kona or drip filters). Because of the strength and concentration of flavours and aromas espresso is used as a base for most "café" style beverages (flat white, long black etc).

As noted earlier espresso drinks are frequently blended (although some still prefer served alone espresso, more commonly known as a "short black") usually with steamed milk or hot water. In addition to adding steamed milk or water the espresso machine operator or "barista" (Italian word for bartender) can restrict or add more espresso depending on customer preference or drink type. This can be achieved by using a single and double shot porta-filter which corresponds to approximately 30 and 60 ml. of liquor respectively. Or to make things easier a single shot of espresso should roughly fill a standard New Zealand shot glass.

Although there are many factors that may influence the quality of your espresso (roast, storage of beans, quality and maintenance of equipment...Just to name a few) it is ultimately the baristas responsibility to control these variables to ensure that a certain level of quality and consistency is maintained, this way customers will always know what they are getting and will in effect leave satisfied and want to return to your organization.

As with most things practice makes perfect and most truly exceptional baristas fine-tune their methods over time. However, there are some universal skills and ideas described on the next page that will hopefully aid you in your pursuit of espresso perfection.

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Grinding Espresso

Espresso should use a fine grind that achieves an extraction time of around 20-25 seconds. One should not compensate for a too fine or too coarse by adjusting tamping pressure, rather the grinder should be adjusted to suit the barista.

Dosing Espresso

Coffee beans should be freshly ground to achieve maximum flavour and aroma, thus try to only grind what you need for each drink (approximately 15grams of ground coffee for a single porta-filter) and make sure you distribute the coffee evenly. Discard used grounds immediately after use.

Tamping Espresso

The coffee should be tamped once using around 5lb. (or around 2.25kg.) of pressure then knocked once on the side of the basket to move any coffee that is stuck to the side of the porta-filter, then tamp with around 30lb. (or around 13.5kg.) of pressure and polish 720° with minimal pressure.

Espresso Extraction

As described above extraction time for a double shot (60ml.) of espresso should be approximately 20-25 seconds with a goal of a consistent golden to dark brown liquor that has little to no colour changes throughout the extraction process.

Espresso Machine Cleaning and Maintenance

One of the most important and perhaps most overlooked factors in espresso coffee preparation. If the machine is not flushed and porta-filters, baskets and grinding equipment are not cleaned regularly the resulting drinks produced will always taste rancid.

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Beverage Variations

Cappuccino: Traditionally served single shot with one-third foam and two-thirds milk (made in the same way as a flat white, but with more foam). Can be topped with chocolate or cinnamon if requested.

Doppio: Italian for "double". Two shots (60ml.) of espresso served in a demitasse cup.

Espresso: Sometimes referred to as a short black. A single shot of espresso coffee served in a demitasse cup.

Flat White: Conventionally made with a single shot of espresso topped with steamed milk with very little foam (2-3 mm.). Served in a medium sized cup.

Latte: Italian for "milk". Made in the same way as a flat white but using a larger cup to produce a milkier coffee. Generally served with a double shot of espresso but should be made to customer's specifications.

Long Black: A single shot of espresso is added to hot water in a tulip cup (espresso is ALWAYS added second to produce a drink that has superior flavour and is aesthetically pleasing).

Macchiato: Italian for "stained". A small dollop of steamed milk is added to the espresso shot. The idea is that the milk soaks up any of the stronger bittersweet flavours that some people find undesirable in espresso coffee.

Mochachino: Normally, a cappuccino blended with chocolate (mixed BEFORE steamed milk is added to prevent the chocolate clumping).