

Performing a Cupping

1. *Setting up the equipment*

You will need a variety of whole-bean single origin coffees, burr coffee grinder, kettle of near boiling water, silver Tablespoon

A small porcelain cup, a second cup, or somewhere to spit the coffee out, a large silver spoon per person

Note: be prepared to either rinse each person's cup and spoon between tasting each coffee variety, or provide separate cups and spoons for each coffee variety.

Make sure all your equipment is cleaned and free of rancid coffee oils and/or detergent residue.

Fill your kettle with cold, fresh water and allow it to cool slightly before coming into contact with the coffee. This avoids scalding and over-extraction. Depending on the quality of your water, you may find that using filtered water significantly improves the taste of your coffee.

Use a medium-course grind.

For each coffee variety, use a consistent amount of coffee and grind-size to make for equality and better comparison (two heaped tablespoons (ground) to 6 oz of water).

2. *Begin - The Coffee Cupping Procedure*

Step 1 - Assess the Fragrance

Grind: grind the first variety of coffee and use the tablespoon to place two heaped spoonfuls in each person's cup.

Smell: leaning over the cup of freshly ground coffee, each person should inhale deeply and assess the fragrance.

Evaluate: does the coffee smell sweet (revealing acidity)? Notice the intensity of the fragrance - this is an indicator of the freshness of the roast.

Step 2 - Assess the Aroma

Pour & Wait: onto each sample, pour about 6oz of water, being sure to cover all the grounds. The water should be just cooler than boiling temperature. The easiest way to do this is to boil the water first and leave it for 1 minute before pouring.

Wait for about 3 minutes for the coffee to infuse. During this time the coffee grounds will rise and form a crust on top of the liquid.

Smell: using their spoon, each person should break the crust, pushing back the grounds to see the liquid. At the same time inhale deeply and assess the aroma. Allow the crust grounds to sink.

Evaluate: the aroma that can be smelt makes a significant contribution to the coffee's flavor. You might use words such as chocolately, caramelly, fruity or spicy if you like the aroma. If you find the aroma unpleasant, words such as harsh, grassy or musty might apply.

Step 3 - Assess the Taste (Acidity, Body & Flavor)

Slurp & Swirl: using their spoon, each person should ladle a spoonful of coffee into their mouths, then forcefully slurp the liquid to the back of the mouth, sucking in air at the same time. The air should

mix with the coffee and disperse it evenly, allowing it to touch all of the tongue's taste areas (bitter, sweet, salty & sour). Swirl the coffee around the mouth and feel its consistency and body.

Evaluate: the way the liquid felt in your mouth can be used to describe the coffee's body. Did you think it was a light, medium or full-bodied coffee? How would you describe the acidity of the coffee? Was it bright, fruity, metallic, or simply flat and lacklustre? Now that you have considered both the aroma and taste, how would you describe the overall flavour? Was it positive - fruity, winey or nutty? Was it negative - rubbery, chemically or green?

Bright or dry – highly acidic leaving a dry aftertaste
Caramelly – caramel like or syrupy
Chocolaty – aftertaste similar to unsweetened [chocolate](#) or vanilla
Earthy – a soily-like quality (sometimes unfavorable)
Fragrant – an aroma ranging from floral to nutty to spicy, etc.
Fruity – having a citrus or berry scent
Mellow – a smooth taste lacking acidity but not flat
Nutty – similar to roasted nuts
Spicy – an exotic aroma of various spices
Sweet – a lack of harshness
Wild – a gamey flavor rarely, but sometimes considered favorable
Winy – aftertaste resembling a mature wine

Here are some terms used to describe UNDESIRABLE flavor qualities:

Bitter – aftertaste perceived on the back of the tongue
Bland – neutral in flavor
Carbony – burnt charcoal flavors
Earthy – a musty, soily-like quality

Flat – lacking aroma, acidity, and aftertaste
Grassy – aroma and taste of grass
Harsh – a caustic, raspy quality
Muddy – thick and flat
Musty – slightly stuffy smell (sometimes desirable in aged coffees)
Rubbery – a smell of burnt rubber
Sour – a tart flavor such as unripe fruit
Turpeny – a flavor resembling turpentine
Watery – a lack of body
Wild – a gamey flavor

Tasting the Roasts

As coffee is roasted, it goes from a sharper, more acidic taste, to a smoother more full bodied taste, and finally to a full bodied, almost charred taste. Here is a breakdown of the typical roasts followed by the flavor characteristics.

- **Cinnamon or Light Roast** (Light brown and dry surface): a bright, acidic, toasted grain taste.
- **Medium High or Regular Roast** (Milk chocolate brown with a dry surface): acidic and bright but lacks the grain taste.
- **Full City or High Roast** (Darker brown with a satin appearance): Slight bittersweet tang with less acidity.
- **French, Italian, or Espresso Roast** (Dark chocolate with patches of oil): Very [little](#) acidity and noticeably bittersweet.
- **Dark French or Heavy** (Almost black and very oily): Almost no acidity and very bittersweet.