

# Espresso 101

## Espresso Overview

Espresso is a taste experience like no other. If you truly love the great espresso in your local coffee shop you may want to create this heavenly beverage at home. So how do you create the perfect espresso?

To brew the perfect espresso shot over and over again here's what you need to know.

**A quality machine** To make sure that you're using the correct amount of water pressure and the right temperature of water for your espresso, you need to spend some time looking for a quality machine that can consistently deliver.

**The best coffee** To make the best espresso you need the best coffee you can get. You can use any sort of varietal of bean so long as its dark roasted. I prefer an Asia Pacific / Latin America blend.

**Water Quality** When creating espresso, you should only use water that tastes good enough to drink. The best espresso is made with filtered tap water or bottled water, as these contain no flavour taints such as chlorine. This will help to ensure each shot is as good as the one before.

**Pour Time** – When pulling a doppio (double) espresso I have found that 18 to 23 seconds on my espresso machine gives a perfectly extracted espresso shot. Shots taking longer will take on a very bitter taste as the water in contact with coffee for too long (over extracted), less and the shot will tend to be thin and watery as the water has not had enough contact (under extracted).

**Crema** – . This should be a reddish brown colour, a very pale crema indicates under extraction, very dark over extraction. Crema is one of the many joys of espresso. The honeycomb network of bubbles traps many of the aromatics ready to release them as the bubbles burst on the tongue. It lends both to its appealing texture and look

**Serve Promptly** – Espresso begins to lose its rich aroma and its flavour becomes sour and dull. As it spoils quickly espresso should be served soon as it is poured.

## Introducing the 5 variables of the perfect shot

1. Grind: If the grind is too fine the espresso will be over extracted and bitter.
2. Dose: 14g of finely ground coffee should be used to create a doppio (Double) espresso
3. Tamp: Perfect tamp pressure is around 30lbs, more will create a bitter over extracted brew
4. Water Temperature: Too hot and espresso will taste burnt, too cool and will taste sour
5. Pour Rate: optimal pour time should be between 18 and 23 seconds

Espresso preparation requires care and consciousness on the part of the operator. The job is given so much respect that in Italy the term "barista," or espresso bartender, is earned through proven skill and experience and considered an honourable title.

## Practice makes perfect

To make sure that each shot is perfect, you will need to practice. Once you get the hang of brewing the perfect espresso shot, it will become second. The best test of espresso quality is still by using our senses, how does it look when pouring, does it have the Guinness effect as it settles, does it have 3 defined parts (heart, body and crema), how rich and sweet (reminiscent of caramel) is it's aroma, how does it taste.

Because espresso has a much more intense flavour than other beverages, learning to taste and evaluate shot quality takes time and practice.