

# As You Like It

*How to make the best coffee? It's a matter of taste*

BY HEATHER YOUNG • PHOTOS BY JAYME BURROWS

Coffee has been a favorite beverage of mine since I was a child. Much to my mother's dismay, my elderly babysitter started giving me coffee at 2 years of age, and I loved it. Despite drinking black coffee since I was young, I didn't know the complexity of coffee or how similar coffee is to wine.

Though coffee is an ever-present pleasure—or vice, for some—many don't know all that goes into making that cup of chocolate-colored love. After a few hours chatting with the experts at Kreuzberg Roasting Company in San Luis Obispo, JoeBella Coffee Roasters in Atascadero and Spearhead Coffee in Paso Robles, I realized just how little I knew about coffee.

First of all, the taste of the coffee depends on multiple factors: coffee variety; where and how it's grown; how the bean is processed, dried and then roasted; how freshly roasted the beans are; how long since the beans were ground; and what brew method is used. As well as the "recipe" used to make the coffee.

After talking to James Whitaker, Josh "Archie" Archuleta and Shawn Clark of Kreuzberg, Jeremy Sizemore and Matt Klomp of Spearhead and Joseph Gerardis and Michael Ormsby of JoeBella, had a better understanding of why I sometimes love one cup of coffee but hate the next.

While Archuleta cited the ratio between coffee and water as important factors, Clark emphasized the freshness of the roast and grind.

"Where it all starts is having your beans at the right age," Clark said. "It's releasing a lot of gases at first, then it chills out a little bit. Quality goes up after the first day [after roasting]. The sixth day [the beans are at their] best quality."

He recommends using the beans within two weeks of roasting.

Clark said that for pour over and French press, bring the water to a boil and then let it set while getting all your coffee supplies together, which will bring it down to about 190–200°.

## POUR OVER

Pour over coffee is brewed by pouring heated water—usually between 190° and 205°—through a cone lined with a filter made of paper, cloth or metal.

Archuleta said that the coffee for a pour over should be ground a little more finely than for drip coffee. Clark said it should be a little coarser than sand. For a drip coffee, the grind should be the size of rock salt.

Before adding the ground coffee, wet the filter to remove any residue that could add a paper taste to the coffee. Whitaker added that it's important to toss the water used to wet the filter before brewing the coffee. Next, pour the coffee grounds into the filter. Using a gooseneck kettle, pre-wet the ground coffee with a small amount of water to allow it to "bloom." This allows the gases to escape.

While the crew at Kreuzberg uses the scale and a timer for each pour over, the baristas at JoeBella, use their eyes. Gerardis said that while weighing the coffee is important, he's less precise with the water—an intuitive approach he attributes to his Italian heritage.

With 25 grams of coffee per filter, James said the clock starts when the water hits the coffee. Wait 30 seconds after the first pour while not allowing the grounds to dry out, stir the grounds, then slowly pour the remainder of the 365 grams of water. Clark said that using the gooseneck helps with precision pouring, allowing the person brewing the coffee to gently and slowly reach each coffee ground to ensure a balanced brew.

While Kreuzberg aims to have the brew finished by the time the clock reaches three minutes, 30 seconds, at JoeBella, Ormsby said, the crew aims to pour just enough water to fill the cup.

"We always want to end with the cup full with no more water in the funnel," Ormsby said.

## FRENCH PRESS

While the pour over method passes the water through the coffee, the French press method extracts the coffee by immersion.

"You want to grind your coffee much more coarse [than for drip coffee]," Archuleta said. Clark said it should be the consistency of kosher salt.

"If you over-extract your coffee beans, you're going to get a lot more organic materials in the coffee," Archuleta said.

French pressed coffee tends to be more murky, while a pour over coffee is crisper—much like an oaked Chardonnay vs. a Chardonnay fermented in stainless steel.

In the end, the coffee experts tended to be on the same page though they had different ideas on what was the key to making the best coffee. As with wine, it all comes down to your own preference. Similarly, you need to taste different varieties of coffee, as well as experiment with different methods. Taste a side-by-side of drip, pour over and French press of a single coffee and see which you like the best. Ask for a cupping at your local roastery. ☞

## Tips for ..... making the best coffee

- Use freshly roasted and freshly ground beans.
- Use a burr grinder—instead of a blade—if possible, as it grinds the coffee more evenly.
- Use filtered water.
- Heat water to 190°–205°.
- Measure coffee and water.
- Time French press brew to 4 minutes.
- Store coffee in a sealed container at room temperature.

## What is Decaffeinated Coffee?

There are two basic methods for producing decaffeinated coffee. The conventional approach uses chemicals to aid in the extraction of the caffeine, and a water-based method uses water and an activated charcoal filter.

According to the International Coffee Research Association, the conventional extraction includes soaking the beans in water to dissolve the caffeine, then using a solvent—such as methylene chloride or ethyl acetate—to extract the caffeine from the water. The beans are then soaked in the decaffeinated water to re-absorb some of the flavor compounds that were lost in the initial soaking. Another conventional method is a more direct solvent-based process that includes steaming the beans for a short period and then flushing them directly with ethyl acetate. The remaining caffeine-rich solvent is discarded and the beans are again steamed to remove any lingering particles.

For the Swiss water process, the green

coffee beans are soaked in hot water, which extracts all soluble material from the beans. The water solution is then filtered through an activated carbon filter to separate the caffeine from the aromatic elements of the coffee that were also leached in the soaking process (the porosity of the carbon filter traps the caffeine molecules but allows the flavor and oils to flow through. Once the caffeine has been separated, the beans are soaked again in the water solution—now containing only the bean aromatics. The flavorless and caffeine-free beans are then discarded but the flavor-rich water is used for a new batch of beans. The same process is used, however since the water is already saturated with oils and flavor molecules, it can't absorb any more from the bean so only the caffeine is extracted—leaving most of the original flavor intact.

Use a coarser grind for decaffeinated coffee than you would for regular coffee.

"The water process makes the bean a lot different," Ormsby said.

# HOME-BREW LIKE A PRO

## French press

25 grams ground coffee—the consistency of kosher salt  
365 grams heated filtered water (best temperature is 190°–200°)

### French press

Heat water to 200°–210°—roughly a boil—then let it set while you get your supplies together.

Warm your French press with hot water for 30 seconds, toss that water and then add the ground coffee. With your French press on a

kitchen scale, start the timer as you add the hot water. Fill your press about halfway.

At 2 minutes, stir the grounds and add the remainder of the water. Place the top of the press on the pot, but do not press it. At 4 minutes, gently push the filter with the palm of your hand. Don't push it down too fast, as some grounds could escape.

### Pour over

20 to 25 grams ground coffee—it should be a little coarser than sand  
365 grams heated filtered water (best temperature is 190°–200°)

### Gooseneck kettle

### Cone filter

### Coffee filter

Heat water to 200°–210°—roughly a full boil—then let it set while you get your supplies together.

Thoroughly wet your filter over your cup. The water will also warm your cup to prevent the loss of heat by pouring it into a cold vessel. Be sure to toss that water before brewing.

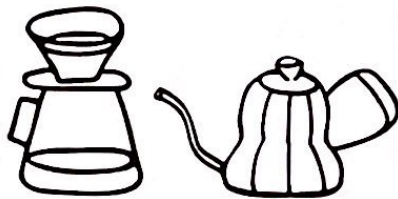
With your cup and cone filter on the scale, add the ground coffee to the filter and pre-wet the grounds and start the timer. After 30 seconds stir the grounds and slowly add the hot water with a gooseneck kettle, being sure that the grounds never dry out until you finish the brew by 3 minutes and 30 seconds.

## Drip coffee

2 tablespoons ground coffee—the consistency of rock salt  
6 ounces filtered water



*french press*



*pour over*

