



I DON'T BLAME MY parents. They did what everyone else was doing at the time. Back in the early 90s, when I was a kid, my parents used to concoct burning hot cups of sickly

sweet, chicory-based coffee that smelled and looked like diesel. They'd scoop chunks of granulated powder from big, cheap tubs, mix in even bigger chunks of creamer, and zap it in the microwave. They didn't even try to pretend it was good. The stuff tasted like dishwater filtered through volcanic ash. It wasn't until I met my now-wife that I drank the cup that forever changed my coffee-drinking life. This epiphany-inducing beverage was handed to me by a tattooed, mohawked kid at Deluxe Coffeeworks in Cape Town.

It was beautiful; a brew with sweet, round flavours, as if it were made from a warm blackberry reduction. It was so good that I felt tingly nerve impulses relax my jaw muscles to let the hot nectar reach more of my mouth. This was a cup I'd never found at any of the big coffee franchises. Deluxe's secret: delicately

roasted beans from small estates in South America and Central Africa, brewed in an exacting way. "The big roasters are primarily concerned with reproducibility," says Bill Ristenpart, an associate professor of chemical engineering. Most of the time, this means their beans lack subtle floral, citrus and berry flavours, he says.

How can you taste your own palate-altering cup? Read on and you'll discover how to build a brew that's way better than mass-market mud or coffeepot slop.

For most of the 20th century, coffee was considered a health menace. The bad rap primarily came from vague and wild claims dating back to the 1600s, says coffee historian Robert Thurston, senior editor of *Coffee: A Comprehensive Guide to the Bean, the Beverage and the Industry*. The little research that came out in the mid-1900s implicated the brew in a host of ills, including cancer and coronary artery disease. However, these studies were prone to flaws.

But now reams of research show that drinking a few cups of coffee a day may help you live longer. In the past three years, various studies have linked coffee consumption to a reduced risk of

Make the Best Coffee You'll Ever Drink

One taste and you'll boycott your barista



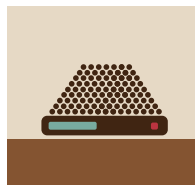
1/ Get Fresh

Choose coffee beans with roast dates (not "best by" dates) within the past two weeks. For mail-order beans, try beanthere.co.za.



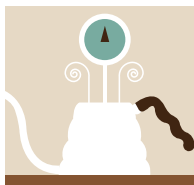
2/ Use a Burr Grinder

Buy a manual Hario Skerton Manual Ceramic Burr coffee grinder (R699) or electric Russell Hobbs Coffee Bean Grinder Encore (R349, both yuppiechef.com).



3/ Count Your Beans

On a digital kitchen scale, weigh 25 grams whole beans and 350 grams water per mug. Grind them coarse for a plunger, and fine for a moka pot.



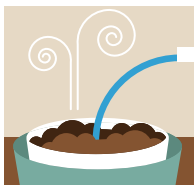
4/ Take Its Temp

Your brewing water temp should be 90° to 95°. Water boils at 100°, so boil a kettle, take it off the heat and let it sit for 30 seconds.



5/ Start the Bath

Set a cup with a dripper on the scale (Hario V60, R299, yuppiechef.com). Add a filter; rinse it with hot water. Dump the water, zero the scale and add the grounds.



6/ Watch It Bloom

Pour with a slow, circular motion until you add 25 to 50 grams of water. If the coffee's fresh, the bed of grounds will "puff" as if it's inhaling.



7/ Fill the Cup

Once the grounds settle back down, resaturate them until you've poured in all the water. The whole process takes 2½ to 3 minutes.



8/ Fine-Tune

Now sip your brew. If the coffee tastes bitter, try grinding your beans a bit coarser next time. Bland? Go with a finer setting on your grinder.

COLD COFFEE

Brew Once, Drink for a Week

The pros at Cove Coffee Co. on how (and why) to cold-brew your coffee

Cold-brewed coffee is naturally less acidic, as it doesn't touch any heat; it's also less bitter and bigger on flavour. Plus, it packs a caffeine punch, and you can put it in anything, from smoothies and shakes to jars, over ice. Forget that overpriced coffee shop; sealed properly, cold-brewed coffee will last up to a month.

Here's How

TWO THINGS ARE MOST IMPORTANT:

- 1/ Use coffee that is coarsely ground. Ask your barista to grind for a plunger.
- 2/ And use only spring or filtered water. Tap water just won't do.



We'd recommend making 1-litre batches at home, but the recipe can be scaled up. We also prefer using mason jars, but feel free to use any type of container that can be sealed.

METHOD:

- 1/ Chuck between 60 and 90 grams of ground coffee into a jar with a litre of water. (You can play around with the ratio to suit your taste.)
- 2/ Then leave to soak for 12 to 24 hours. Again, length of time is up to your taste buds.
- 3/ Once your coffee has finished soaking, filter the liquid using a coffee filter or muslin cloth and serve over ice.



YOU CAN STORE YOUR BREW IN THE FRIDGE IN AN AIRTIGHT CONTAINER, FOR UP TO A MONTH OR AS LONG AS YOU NEED IT TO. LIKE ALL COFFEE, IT CAN BE BITTER ON ITS OWN, SO ADD MILK TO TASTE.

FOR COLD-BREW DRINK RECIPES, CHECK OUT COVECOFFEE.CO.ZA