

EXPLORING THE CRAFT OF COFFEE

Nº67

Extracted

Coffee. Black.

ISSUE 67
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Review the Magazine

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EXTRACTED MAGAZINE seeks to educate, delight, and empower coffee drinkers everywhere bringing you into the world of **craft specialty coffee**. We build connection and understanding that raises the value and the lives of people in coffee around the world, as well as each individual cup that you enjoy.

Even though coffee is consumed by billions worldwide, many are unaware of the significance of the beverage in their cups. Conscious consumption of coffee leads to not only the best tasting coffee of your life, but more powerfully supports the various cultures and peoples that are responsible for that coffee.

Extracted reflects this growing awareness and empowers all coffee drinkers to discover the richness, not only of flavor, but also of the history and relationships of the coffee in your cup.

Extracted
MAGAZINE





FEATURE ARTICLE

Diving Into Black Coffee

Joseph Robertson

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Be the Next
Connoisseur of the Month

CONNOISSEUR OF THE MONTH

Andie Rankins

@AndieRankins



Hot Orange Spiced Coffee: I put two tablespoons of brown sugar and a few dashes of cinnamon in the bottom in my Kalita Wave, made my pour over with fresh ground coffee and orange zest, then added a dollop of whipped cream. It was very tasty.

My coffee journey really started with my first child 10 years ago. I needed the caffeine to keep me awake and fell in love with the experience. It was what I looked forward to when I started my mornings before my son woke up. Fast forward 10 years and now coffee is the way I connect with people. Coffee brings people together in more ways than I can count. A project I've been brainstorming and hope to put to work shortly is a coffee tour with a few friends. I haven't decided if we'll tour local coffee shops and learn different roasting methods or if we'll gather in my home and do coffee tastings from different regions. As a working mom, finding time to connect with other adults is hard but I've discovered that quite a few of my friends are coffee nerds just like me!



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Coffee Facts



Medium Roast

Coffees which are roasted more than 'light' but less than 'dark.' They exhibit taste characteristics of origin, but also bring in more caramelized sugars and tastes that are created in the roasting process. Often between first and second 'crack.' Some of my favorite medium roasts exhibit flavors like chocolate, caramel, and graham cracker

Diving Into

Black Coffee

How do you make that leap then, from drinking coffee with milk and sugar, with flavorings perhaps, to drinking black coffee, to enjoying coffee for it's own intrinsic beautiful flavor qualities?

By **Joseph Robertson**





“Coffee. Black.”

THE IDEA OF BLACK COFFEE has been woven deep into our cultural perception. It's usually intertwined with ideas about how harsh black coffee is, how strong it is, how strong you are if you drink it, and then paired with the contrast of coffee with milk and sugar to varying degrees.

By definition, black coffee is simply brewed coffee with nothing added. You pass water through ground roasted coffee beans (or let them sit and brew for a few minutes), filter out the grounds at the end, and what you get is 'black coffee.' At least, until you add milk and sugar, then it becomes something else. By definition.

Well sourced, well roasted, well brewed coffee is often not actually 'black.' Especially light and medium roasted natural coffees can carry interesting layers of color to them. Some of my most favorite coffees have shown a deep red hue.

The idea of 'black coffee' has loose references throughout the history of coffee consumption. You've probably heard some version of the Turkish proverb: Coffee should be black as hell, strong as death, sweet as love.



Coffee's most pure preparation is a black(ish) drink, so this is little surprise. Early drinking of coffee would see additions of fat and sugar as natural ways to consume these things alongside ritual.

Modern views of 'black coffee' are naturally woven alongside the contrast of latte culture. As society progressed, coffee became more widely consumed, quality decreased, the addition of milk and sugar became necessary to make the drink enjoyable, introducing the necessity to specify coffee with nothing added as 'black coffee' owing to its appearance.

This an interesting phenomenon to look at when you get into the dichotomous approach to coffee in general – is coffee a drug to you or is it something much more? If you are drinking coffee solely as a drug, then your approach and perception of black coffee may be more about how it has ONLY coffee in it, and that adds to your personal image of what coffee should be (there is indeed a lot of marketing out there playing off this idea that black coffee is for stronger people, is more coffee than any other kind of coffee, etc). On the other side of the

equation, if coffee is more than a drug to you, then the exploration of black coffee is an exploration of the coffee itself in it's purest form - after all, how can you really taste and understand the coffee if you are distorting and masking things with additives?

NOTE: This isn't to say that adding milk/sugar is wrong or bad. From a hoity toity enthusiast point of view, there is actually a very good reason to explore coffeee with additives, because they can help you see things in coffee you can't otherwise. Also a proper mocha is wonderfully delicious. With that being said, if you have an interest in knowing the purest natural taste of the roasted coffee, there's no other route than 'black.'

Why Drink Black Coffee?

Exploration of the natural taste of coffee is why I always hope people want to get into drinking coffee with nothing added. I almost never drinking coffee with milk and sugar these days because the natural complex taste and sweetness of coffee to me is so good that I usually can't see a reason to drink it any other way.

Drinking coffee 'black' is also cheaper and easier to enjoy. Want to dive into black coffee brewed at home? Get in on my ['become a coffee connoisseur'] series, grab yourself a French Press, and you can be brewing specialty cafe quality coffee in no time, and at a fraction of the cost.

The Cost

On the subject of cost, I see a lot of people new to specialty coffee balk at the cost of higher quality roasted coffee. Let's do some napkin math. I'm going to take the cheapest decent quality brewed coffee in a cafe around here as an example and compare it to what I usually brew each morning.

The cost of the brewed coffee, plus a refill (two 8 ounce cups), plus tip at the cafe we can say is \$3. Going to the cafe every morning 5 days a week equals \$60 a month. This is 20 mornings of coffee.

I brew every morning with 30 grams of coffee, which gives me about two 8 ounce cups. A bag of very good specialty roast can be \$20 for 12 ounces, or 340 grams. This yields 11 mornings of coffee per bag. You spend \$40 a month for the same amount of coffee as the cafe scenario - and it should be noted that you'll have a much more elevated tasting experience with this process (higher quality, more variety, made by your own hand).

To contrast with drinking a latte every day, at \$5 with tip (and for less coffee than the brew), you're looking at least \$100 /mo on lattes, if not more.

Your Health

Another popular reason for drinking coffee black is the perceivable benefit to your health. Without making any wild health claims, we do know that brewed coffee with nothing added has virtually zero calories. Each year there are more research studies being released which demonstrate correlations

between coffee consumption and various overall benefits to health. All of this interesting research being done is with pure brewed coffee - once you add in heavy consumption of dairy and sugar, the data goes out the window. As a comparison argument, would you drink a glass of milk full of sugar every day?



The People and The History

Lastly, I think one of the best reasons to drink coffee black is that it brings you closer to the coffee. In it's purest consumable form, you are closer with the producers, the roasters, all of the people involved in between, and the history of coffee itself.

How do you make that leap then, from drinking coffee with milk and sugar, with flavorings perhaps, to drinking black coffee, to enjoying coffee for it's own intrinsic beautiful flavor qualities?

Shift Your Perspective

This begins as an exercise in perspective shifting. If you are coming from a reality in which you have coffee with milk and sugar to mask natural flavors you don't like in coffee – most likely due to a darker roast, with lots of carbon, burnt sugars and oils – then the shift will be more challenging to make. You will need to train your taste perspective to be aware of and recognize more subtle flavors due to the complex combination of acids, lipids, and sugars that are natural in coffee. Eventually you'll get to the place where you can recognize brewed coffee as naturally and deeply sweet, but this takes time.

There are two major factors at play in how this process will work for you. The first is the quality of the coffee itself. This may seem subjective, but it really is not – however you'll have a bit of a chicken and egg situation where your taste perspective is not acclimated enough to be able to discern quality coffee.





Diving Into Black Coffee

The second factor is the actual things that are added to your coffee which ultimately need to be all removed to enjoy 'Black Coffee.' I recommend a stepping stone approach to making this change. Begin by removing distinct flavor additives (chocolate, hazelnut, caramel, etc). From there start removing sugar, and then finally remove milk. The more gradual you make these steps, the easier the next one will be - however if you are daring you can certainly start by removing all of them.

Our scientific understanding of taste and how the things we consume affect our taste is unfortunately limited. Even not taking into account genetic variables in how we taste things, and a growing understanding that biological interactions with caffeine affect our interest and taste in coffee, there are apparent effects on how one tastes in general which are only known through personal observation.

My two greatest recommendations for shifting how you perceive taste – to be able to discern, appreciate, and enjoy the natural taste of coffee – are to remove added sugar from your diet, and to stop drinking dark roasted coffee.

Removing Sugar

One of the greatest ways I've found to alter the way you taste is to make a concerted effort to remove sugar entirely from your diet. This expands outside the realm of coffee, but if you spend a month eating food which has no sugar in it, your ability to taste things is going to completely change. If this thought sounds difficult to you, remember it's just a month, and you can always celebrate the end with a pile of krispy kreme. Regardless of the "results" I think you'll find the experience eye opening (or taste-bud-opening?)

Roast Level

On the subject of dark roast, there is a marked difference in taste structure of a dark roast coffee vs a light or a medium roast. The more you roast coffee the more you caramelize the sugars in the seed (and eventually, carbonization occurs and starts to influence the flavor, with the possible added influence of burning natural oils). This of the difference between a raw onion, a lightly cooked onion, and a fully caramelized onion - the taste differences at each level are quite remarkable if you think about it, with a fully caramelized onion being a wildly different tasting experience even than just lightly cooked.



Aside from the potential influence of caramelized sugars and carbon in dark roast coffee, the process of roasting the coffee much darker than medium removes a great deal of the taste compounds that are a result of the natural growth of the coffee. You won't be able to develop an appreciation of natural coffee taste if the coffee is roasted dark.

Embrace Appreciation

That brings us to the final step in the process of getting into drinking Black Coffee – embracing an appreciation of the origin of the coffee and the people who made it. Whether you can consciously understand how this affects your perception or not is irrelevant at the beginning.

By tasting coffee with nothing added, paying attention to the origin of that coffee, who grew it, who roasted it, and how it was roasted, you are going to be entering a process of training your brain and your taste to fully integrate all the subtle experiences you can't fully perceive in the moment.

Time Spent

From this point, your experience with Black Coffee will only grow. The more you drink brewed coffee with nothing added, the more you'll start to recognize natural flavors, to see the natural sweetness in the coffee, to start drawing an understanding of which origins, processing, and roast styles you tend to prefer.

How to Prepare Your Coffee Black

Black coffee is a simple concept - brewed coffee with nothing added. This is the purest expression of the coffee drink. Much of the image of what 'black coffee' is comes laden with ideas that it has to be in some way gross to most people (or at the very least an extremely "acquired" taste). It has ties to steaming diner coffee that's been sitting in a glass pitcher for hours.

Fortunately getting a great cup of black coffee is actually quite straightforward. Understanding how to purely brew coffee is also critical to your overall coffee experience. All of your coffee drinks will improve once you know what's going on in the brew process, and what each technique can bring to your table.



Brew Method Categories

There are three broad categories of brewing coffee. The first two are considered 'brewed' coffee methods, and include immersion brew and filter brew. The third is espresso. In all cases, the brewing of coffee is the process of using water to extract soluble flavor and aroma compounds from the roasted coffee seeds. The end result in a proper immersion or filter brew is that roughly 1.5% of



your cup is coffee solids and the rest is water. The details change with espresso, since this is a much more concentrated expression and utilizes pressure along with the water – but the essence is the same, in that we have coffee solids in water.

Filtered Coffee

Filter coffee, or filter brew, is the most common process by which coffee is brewed. This is what most people are thinking about when they think about black coffee. In most cases, the process involves suspending ground coffee in a filter in a basket over a carafe, through which you pour and pass hot water. As the water enters, interacts with, and passes through the grounds, the soluble components are extracted into the water, and taken out through the filter in the carafe below, leaving the insoluble coffee left in the basket.

This is a standard drip or pour over method, it is what most automated brewers use, and includes manual brewing methods like Melitta cone, V60, Chemex, and Kalita Wave.

The filter part of filter brew is important. In most filter brew methods, the time that the water spends interacting with the grounds is limited. Almost always the filter and coffee are suspended above the brewing



vessel because gravity is used to pass the water through the grounds. These methods are popular because they are simple, easy to consistently replicate brewing methods with, and perhaps most importantly they provide you a clean cup of coffee with which you can explore all the natural tastes of that coffee.

Within the filter brew category there are many different styles of filtering. On a broad scale, the most popular way to filter coffee is with a paper filter. In recent years, companies have developed

sophisticated reusable metal filters. On a less popular scale cloth filters are also employed. The difference in result between paper and metal filters (the two most popular differing styles) is that paper filters will capture a lot of the oils in the coffee, whereas the metal filter will pass this along. These oils are typically most responsible for the 'body' of the coffee (how it feels in the mouth). This affects the taste experience of your black coffee simply due to the structure of having those extra oils in your cup.

Make Black Coffee with Filter Methods:

Auto Drip Machines – Technivorm Moccamaster, Behmor Brazen, Breville Precision Brewer

Manual Methods – V60, Melitta, Chemex, Kalita Wave

Immersion Brew

On the other side of the spectrum in brewing techniques for making black coffee is immersion brew. The most popular method for this is the French Press.

With immersion brew, instead of passing water through grounds and through a filter, you combine the coffee grounds and the water completely in a container, and allow these to sit and 'steep' (kind of like a tea), for several minutes. Then the coffee is simply poured from this container.

Usually some form of filtering mechanism is used to keep coffee grounds out of your cup. French Press is an immersion brew method in which you can create universally accepted balanced cups of coffee.

Because of the extra time that water is in contact with the grounds, and the lack of filtering, you end up with a different balance of sugars, acids, and oils in your cup of coffee.

An immersion brew typically has greater body and mouthfeel. Because this method has had more time to extract more compounds, the brighter delicate flavors tend to be drowned out by the deeper simpler sugars and oils. In terms of specialty coffee,





and exploring the natural taste of coffee, immersion methods can be tricky to use consistently because of these challenges in flavor balance, especially with lighter roasted coffees (however there are advanced brewing methods to employ which handle these challenges well).

Sometimes there is no filtering done with immersion brewing. A very old and popular brew method which uses immersion is Turkish coffee. In these methods, very finely ground coffee is added to a little pot called an ibrik. Water is added and then

heated several times to encourage the extraction of coffee grounds into the water. Afterwards, you allow the grounds to settle and then pour the coffee into a cup (you still end up with some grounds). This kind of black coffee is much thicker, with a higher percentage of coffee solids to water in your cup than usual.

Filter v. Immersion

The core of the difference between filter and immersion is that immersive brewing methods have more time to extract more fats from the coffee, and they usually keep all those oils in the cup, whereas pour-over / filter methods extract coffee with less water to ground contact time, and the paper filters will capture a lot of the coffee oils. Immersion brew coffees tend to be fuller bodied, with a greater emphasis on darker/richer flavors, while filter methods tend to be crisper and better at highlighting brighter and more delicate flavors.

Espresso v. Brew

Espresso is another method of preparing coffee that is in its own category. Relatively small amounts of water are passed through very finely ground coffee at high pressure. An espresso will contain anywhere from 7-12% coffee in 87-93% water, vs a brew which is usually about 1.5% coffee and 98.5% water.



One method of simulating a standard filter brewed black coffee is to add espresso to hot water – typically known as an Americano or a Long Black, depending on where you are in the world.

The Essence of Black Coffee

In the end, the essence of black coffee is that it is the dissolved solids of roasted coffee within water, and nothing more. The concentration of that coffee, and how it gets into the water will vary, but the essence of black coffee is simple and pure.

Learning to enjoy coffee at it's most pure will open the doors of all it has to offer.



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HOW TO BREW

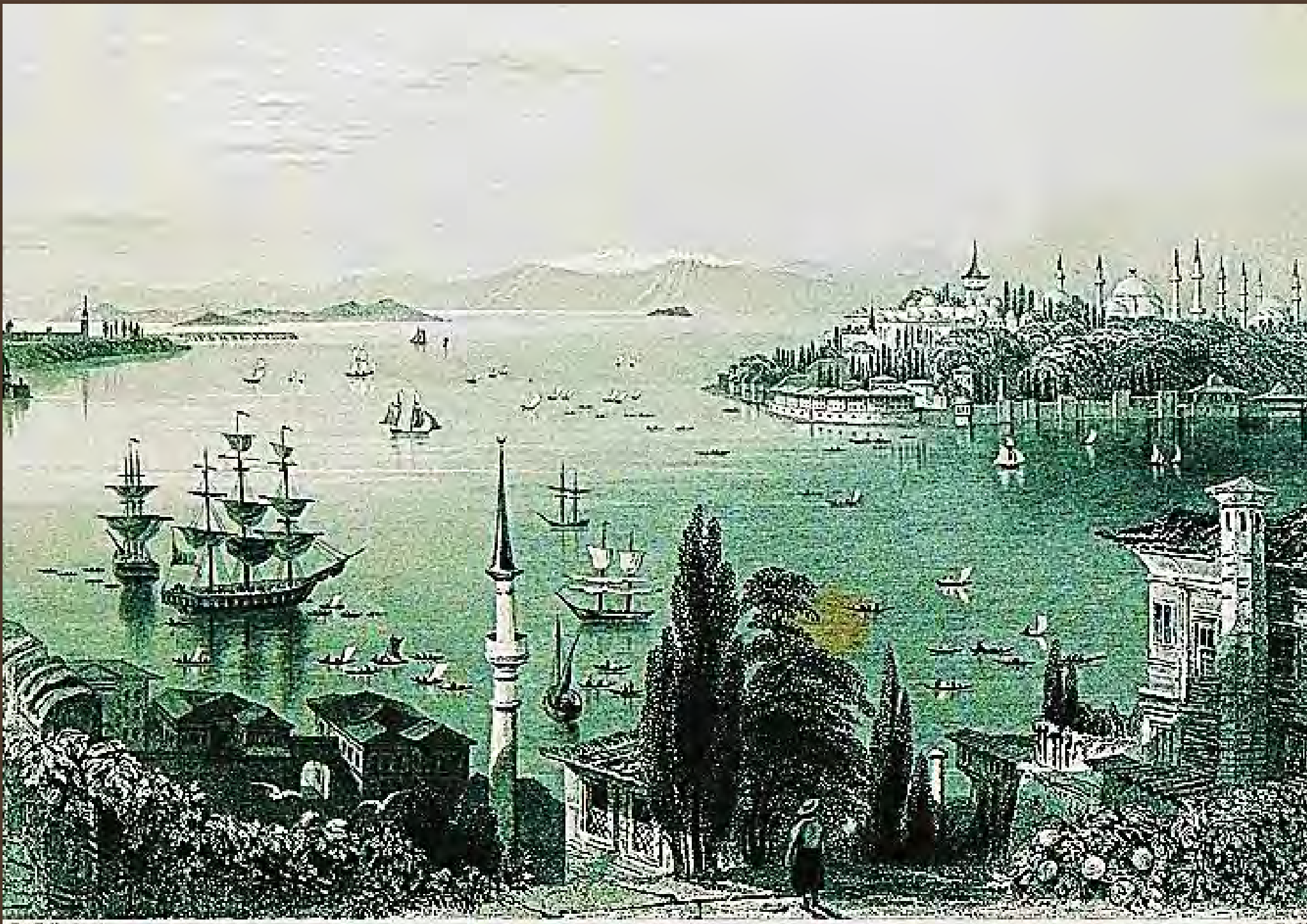
A Better French Press

WHAT YOU NEED:

- ▶ French Press (800ML)
- ▶ 2 Spoons Ground Coffee (medium-coarse)

1. Add 50 grams of medium-coarse coffee - darker roasts lean coarser, lighter roasts lean medium (1:16 ratio).
2. Add 800 grams water, 30 seconds off the boil.
3. Stir, cover, wait 4 minutes.
4. At 4 minutes, take a spoon and push down the surface of the grounds (you can quickly stir).
5. Using 2 spoons, scoop the foam and remaining floating grounds off the top.
6. Press down, pushing all remaining grounds to the bottom.
7. Pour and enjoy!





THE STRAITS OF BOSPHORUS

POINT DE VUE

DAS ENDE DER SPAGLIO STRASSE

*If one had but a single glance to give
the world, one should gaze on Istanbul.*

—Alphonse de Lamartine

COFFEEHOUSE OF THE ANGELS

FORETELLING
THE FUTURE IN
ISTANBUL

By Steven P. Unger

Book Preview | Chapter 3 | Part 2

SULTANAHMET

The peninsula of Sultanahmet is bordered by seas on three sides, for centuries approachable by land only through the Theodosian Wall to the west. The oldest part of Istanbul, Sultanahmet has been continuously inhabited for at least eight thousand years. A few miles away beneath the Marmara Sea, the North Anatolian Fault is always stirring, and the soft soil of the peninsula is the most threatened part of Istanbul. The wealthy Istanbulus build their villas as far from Sultanahmet as they can, on top of the rocky soil of the north.



The hungrier you are in Sultanahmet, the sooner you're likely to devour the first items you see—fresh sardines, squid, octopus, bonito, and sea bream just caught off the Galata Bridge at the mouth of the Golden Horn, prepared simply with fresh grape leaves, salt, or a hint of lemon—and everywhere you go there is simit, an O-shaped roll topped with sesame seeds, sometimes made with added molasses.





If you can save your appetite for a restaurant, the kind where one chef cooks everything over a charcoal grill, the chef will keep serving you until you put your hand on your chest, the universal sign for "I'm full up to here."



If you're there in November you may even see a display of leftover Halloween masks, bargain-basement priced for all tomorrow's Halloween parties.





HAGIA SOPHIA

(Aya Sofya)

The Basilica of Divine Wisdom

For over a thousand years, from the sixth century until the seventeenth, Hagia Sophia was the vastest enclosed space in the world, the embodiment in sacred, coral-pink stone of the might of the Byzantine Empire and the faith of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Yet in one day, with the fall of Constantinople to Mehmet the Conqueror on May 29th, 1453, the largest church in the world became the world's largest mosque.



A stone ramp to the left of the entrance leads to a marble-floored gallery on the second floor, where high up on the walls, golden-haloed mosaics of Byzantine royalty and saints from the New Testament reflect the light of windows filled with colored glass. Each mosaic is made of tens of thousands of tesserae, tiny cubes of glass or semi-precious stones including deep blue lapis lazuli and dark, purple-red porphyry as hard as marble. The tesserae were set in plaster made of limestone and marble dust laid over gold leaf, angled to perfectly scatter the natural light penetrating the cubes.



The mosaics were created when Constantinople had grown into a huge city of 400,000 people. Earthquakes, wars, and great plagues during the reign of Justinian in the sixth century had decimated the population again and again in the past, sometimes by almost two-thirds within a few months. In medieval Constantinople princes lived in luxurious palaces above the squalid streets of the poor; and in the middle world between them were soldiers, priests, and artisans by the thousands.

.....

There were silk weavers, tesserae manufacturers, jewelers, glass blowers, perfume makers, book illustrators, furniture makers, and at least ten thousand religious icon painters, all of whose work was disseminated throughout the Byzantine Empire and beyond, from Cordoba to Jerusalem, from Khartoum to the Russian steppes and the northern shores of the Black Sea.

Most of their creations are gone, but in the fragments that remain of the mosaics of Hagia Sophia we can sense the presence of artists whose three-dimensional mastery of light and color rivalled that of Rembrandt and Leonardo da Vinci. Incidentally, da Vinci designed what would have been the longest bridge in the world—had the design not been rejected by the sultan—across the Golden Horn of the Bosphorus, from Sultanahmet to what is now the bustling center of modern Istanbul, Beyoğlu.

.....



**Golden Horn Bridge designed by Leonardo da Vinci
in 1502. Paris Manuscript L, Folio 65v and 66r**

Coffee Tastes

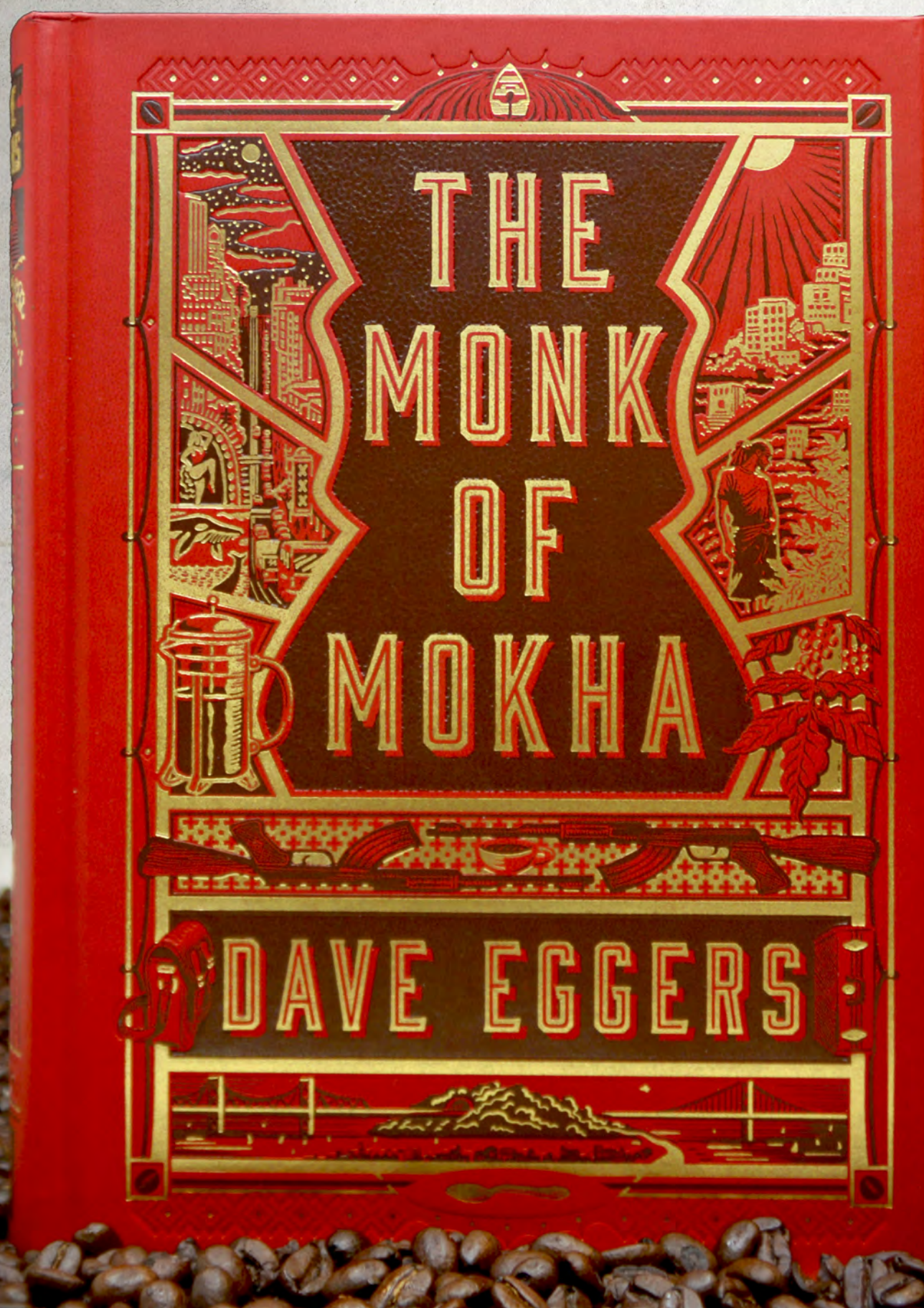


Nuttiness

Tasting of nuts is a common taste to be found, especially in Central and South American coffees. Brazil coffees in particular often have a strong taste of peanuts or peanut butter-like treats.

“AS GRIPPING AND CINEMATICALY
DRAMATIC AS ANY FICTIONAL
CLIFFHANGER” —*The Washington Post*

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VIDEO

Taste Coffee Better By Eliminating Sugar

Coffee Lovers TV



Taste Coffee Better by Eliminating Sugar - Cup of ...



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One of my top recommendations for learning how to taste coffee better is to completely eliminate added sugar to your diet. Consuming things like fruit with sugar in them is just fine, but you'll be surprised how much sugar is in everything, and how removing it can make the natural taste of your food more apparent.





Filter Stories

By James Harper

In the latest episode of Filter Stories, we follow the untold story of the world famous Gesha coffee. It begins with Tito, an 18 year old boy living on the slopes of volcano in Panama.

Tito is a rebel and doesn't listen to anyone. But he's also a rebel with a big heart: he loves his parents and wants to stay close to them. His parents worked the coffee farms around the volcano all their lives but never owned their own farm.

PODCAST

Tito

Filter Stories



Which is why Tito makes a terrible decision: he buys a coffee farm instead of getting an education to become an engineer.

His parents are upset, his friends incredulous. And Tito is now chained to a system that will keep him poor, earning just 40 cents per pound of coffee cherries.

But Tito doesn't give up without a fight. He will spend the next 30 years trying to prove he hasn't made the worst decision of his life.

VIDEO

Mocha Java - Ladro Coffee Roasters Sinergia Project

Coffee Lovers TV



On this show, I smell, taste, enjoy, and share Ladro Coffee Roaster's Mocha Java Blend, as part of their Sinergia Project - exploring high-end coffee blends.

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PRO TIPS

The Best Coffee to Get Into Drinking it Black

Now that you have strategies on the approach to enjoying and appreciating black coffee, I want to give you my two specific recommendations for the best coffee and preparation method for your ‘conversion.’

I think one of the challenges when it comes to adopting black coffee is that most people try to drink the same coffee that they enjoy with milk and sugar (or as a latte). The black coffee article in this issue brings up challenges with dark roast – I want to take this a step further.



The greatest conceptual challenge with adopting a habit of black coffee into your life is going to center around discerning the unique, complex, and rich flavors that are natural in coffee itself. If you start by drinking the same coffee you've always had, but without milk/sugar, what you will end up noticing most is the lack of milk and sugar.

As you might imagine, that could easily make the coffee taste more bitter and undesirable than you might hope (since your perception will be centering on the lack of sweetness and richness imparted by the milk/sugar).

Our goal then, for bringing ourselves and others into black coffee, is to create experiences that are vastly different from what we are used to while allowing us to taste the natural flavors of the coffee.

The Coffee Itself

The first recommendation is to make a dramatic change in the actual coffee that you use. For diving into black coffee – and especially into the taste exploration of coffee – I recommend a light roasted, natural processed, single origin coffee. This kind of coffee will typically have one or two vibrant and clear tastes to it, while also brewing and drinking very well as a black coffee. Because natural process imparts more natural sugar into the roast, you'll pick up on the natural sweetness faster.



The goal here is to provide your taste senses a completely different experience. In most cases, the average coffee is blended, roasted dark, and probably wash processed (historically the cleanest most consistent method to produce on a large scale). We go to the opposite end of the spectrum and provide what is almost a completely different drink.

The Method of Preparation

My second recommendation is to brew using a French Press. Most brewed coffee is created using paper filtered drip or pour over methods. Again if you are coming from a cafe environment, the drip coffee produced there will fit into that category. French Press brews coffee very differently and follows our theme of creating contrast.

The French Press is my #1 recommendation for home brewers diving into the world of craft coffee. Aside from the ease of use, it creates a different style of brew that is more full-bodied and richer in overall taste, and there are two reasons for this.

First, instead of water flowing through a bed of grounds, the water and the grounds sit together for 4+ minutes. One aspect of brewing coffee involves the fact that not all soluble taste components of coffee brew at the same speed. Some take longer. This is one of the reasons a French Press has a fuller body and a seemingly richer taste.

The second is that in a typical French Press, there is no paper filtering, so all the oils extracted from the coffee in the brewing process end up in your cup. This is part of the fuller body experience of the French Press.

The end result is that the cup you brew tastes and feels very different from a typical coffee brew.

You can combine both of these recommendations, or use either one alone. They both serve our purpose of creating contrast from our usual experience and help bridge the road from coffee flavored drinks to just brewed coffee.

Got Coffee Questions?

[Email the Experts](#)



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How to Taste Coffee

Coffee Lovers Radio



Many episodes of Coffee Lovers Radio past, Joseph came up with the concept for his Coffee Tasting 101 Guide. This episode of the show is a long time coming – in which we sit down, go over the guide, how to get into tasting coffee and talk about various ideas of taste, experience, and memory.

[Get the Coffee Taste 101 Guide](#)

Hosts

Joseph Robertson, Extracted Magazine

www.extractedmagazine.com

Jesse Nelson, Conduit Coffee

www.conduitcoffee.com

My Journey Into 'Black Coffee'

The journey into drinking coffee black is a fascinating transition. This is one of those spots in the world of coffee where there can be a large gap between coffee drinkers. It also creates a moment in your own personal experience where your entire taste can change - or rather, you become more attuned to tasting things in a certain way.

Because of this experience, you can find yourself with a particular perspective on coffee (and other taste/sensory experiences in life) which make it challenging to see the point of view of most people's experience with coffee. I've talked in the past about the phenomenon in coffee where, every time you have an eye-opening, life-changing, perspective-altering taste experience, you just can't look back.

This is the phenomenon which leads to pretention, which leads to sides, which brings us to think of coffee in terms of absolute

experiences. In the grand scheme of everything, this is a bizarre realization because we all drink coffee. But you can indeed find yourself on what appears to be the opposite side of the same coin.

When I started drinking coffee, for me it was all mochas and lattes. This was in a world where all the coffee was roasted to char, where you got that particularly pervasive coffee 'taste,' where you are saddled with coffee breath, stained teeth, and all these iconic experiences of regular coffee drinkers. All these things which are a result of drinking charred coffee filled with milk and sugar.



I began my own journey into 'black coffee' for a couple of reasons.

The first was one of curiosity. As I was always getting lattes whenever I went into my regular cafe, I'd not infrequently hear other customers and baristas talking about the tasting experiences of coffee - the tasting notes. Just hearing someone suggest that a coffee has tastes of orange, milk chocolate, nutmeg, and this being coffee with nothing added to it, sparked a curiosity in me.

How could that actually be? This personal experience also simultaneously sparked a bit of the grown-up perspective on coffee. Growing up I'd always viewed coffee as an adult drink, and regularly drinking it was one of my initiations into adult life - so naturally being able to drink it with nothing added was the next step.

The second major reason for making the switch is I didn't want to keep spending several dollars a day to drink several hundred extra calories. I figured, if I could get into drinking coffee on its own, then I could learn to make it myself and keep up the enjoyable habit without brutalizing my monetary and caloric budgets.

In the beginning, I did have very similar coffee to what I was drinking in my lattes. I actually didn't really "like" the black coffee, but I liked that I was drinking it. I'd use tricks to blunt the bitterness and make it more palatable, like adding

cinnamon. However, by and large, I wasn't actually enjoying the coffee I was drinking, but merely making myself 'acquire' the taste.

I also couldn't ever see how people could recognize the tastes that they say were in the coffee.

My experience didn't change until I had one particularly enlightening experience, in a series of forced local coffee explorations (checking out independent cafes), where I had a coffee that actually tasted like I was eating oranges. This experience is the spark that led to the magazine.

Now black coffee to me is the default. I don't put anything in my coffee because the best part to me is the natural sweetness and the intricate tastes that are possible to find. The fact that it's ridiculously affordable to make a drink which is as enjoyable as luxuries like wine and scotch, and that it's a drink with virtually 0 calories is all a bonus.

Get into drinking black coffee. That's where the world of wonders lies.

-Joseph Robertson

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