

How to do a coffee tasting, Starbucks style!

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Making the perfect french press (cafetiere)

1. In a standard french press, add 54g of coarsely ground coffee. If you don't have a grinder, you can go into any Starbucks store and ask the Barista to grind your coffee on the 'french press' setting.
2. Add 1 litre of hot water, just off the boil.
3. Steep for four minutes. Top tip, do not stir the coffee, leave it as it is! Stirring can result in an over brewed coffee and leave a bitter taste.
4. After four minutes, press and pour. One french press should serve eight people.

The four steps of tasting coffee

To develop your tasting skills, follow these steps.

1. SMELL

Always smell a coffee before you taste it. Your mouth distinguishes only four tastes: salty, sweet, bitter and sour—but your nose can detect thousands of smells. Cup your hand over the coffee, hold the cup close to your nose and inhale.

2. SLURP

When tasting a coffee, it's important to slurp it. This sprays the coffee across your entire palate and lets the subtle flavours and aromas reach all the tasting zones of your mouth.

3. LOCATE

Consider the coffee's weight and feel in your mouth. Where are you experiencing the flavours?

4. DESCRIBE

Finally, think about how you would describe your coffee tasting experience. What words would you use to characterise the aroma, flavour and how the coffee feels in your mouth? What other food flavours or aromas can you compare the coffee to?

Describing and differentiating your coffee

All coffees can be differentiated, with practice, by identifying the four tasting characteristics for each one: aroma, acidity, body and flavour.

1. aroma

The way a coffee smells. Sometimes subtle, aromas can be earthy, spicy, floral or nutty and are directly related to the coffee's flavour.

2. acidity

The tanginess or tartness of a coffee, not the pH level, described as low, medium or high. Acidity is a lively, palate cleansing characteristic you'll taste and feel on the sides and tip of your tongue, and sometimes the back of your jawbone, like when you taste citrus fruits. Coffees with high acidity are described as bright, tangy and crisp with a clean finish. Low acidity coffees feel smooth in your mouth.

3. body

The weight of a coffee on your tongue, described as light, medium or full. Like comparing skimmed milk with whole milk, light-bodied coffees feel light on the tongue and have a clean finish. Full-bodied coffees feel heavier and have lingering flavours.

4. flavour

The way a coffee tastes. Sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle, flavours can vary greatly between coffees, from citrus to cocoa to berry, they are all registered in different parts of the mouth.

Since 2014, Starbucks and Send a Cow have been working together to support smallholder farmers in coffee growing regions of Rwanda. Thanks to Starbucks' support, we launched our Coffee and Cows project across three regions of Rwanda, empowering families with the knowledge and skills to live healthily and sustainably from the land.

