

Frequent Customer Questions & Answers

1. When are we bringing back “old beans”?

Whenever a customer requests beans that we do not currently offer, it's important to explain that we have a dynamic selection to let them experience our wide range of coffee origins. Additionally, coffee is a seasonal produce, so there are times when certain beans will not be available. In the case of premium beans, some are very limited lots and are only produced once in a lifetime.

After the explanation, offer another coffee from the same category (using the color-coding on the bags can be helpful).

Color coding

Maroon: Coffees in the maroon bag are more classic, usually featuring a nutty or near-chocolate profile, low acidity, and high sweetness.

Green: Coffees in the green bag are more fruity and clean, ranging from stone fruits to citrus fruits, with acidity that can be medium to medium-high.

Blue: The blue bag is for all the premium and exotic coffees, which have a more funky and unique taste due to special processing methods/fermentation. Some of these can be co-fermented coffees, such as Peach, which will have a very clear and easy to perceive peach flavor.

2. What do you use for flavor (referring to infused or co-fermented beans)?

We do not add any flavoring to our coffees at any of the steps during roasting or beverage preparation; all the flavors present in our coffee are the result of the processing and work in the farms.

- For reference, co-fermented or infused coffees refer to a processing method in which different elements that will influence the final flavor of the beans are added, such as cinnamon, strawberry, peach, or even a mix of various elements. Coffee beans will absorb these flavors and showcase them in the final cup; it's important to keep in mind that this process happens only at the coffee farm. After processing, there is no other flavor or element added to the beans.

3. Long Black vs. Americano

Both are espresso shots with hot water. There is no strict rule on the order in which an Americano is prepared, although recently, the common practice is to place the espresso first. in the cup, followed by hot water. For a long black, however, the espresso is typically poured after the hot water is in the cup. Regarding the amount of water and espresso in the cup, there is no universal standard or expectation, as both beverages are usually served in different sizes at many coffee shops (for Cartel, there is only one size). If a customer asks for a long black, an americano will be punched by the cashier with a note, but it's always better to ask how the customer expects their coffee to be prepared to ensure their expectations are met. **Please keep in mind that unless there is a particular request from the customer, the preparation of these beverages by default in Cartel will be adding first the water and on top of it the espresso shot.**

4. Coffee Processing / Fermentation

Coffee Processing Methods

Coffee processing is how the coffee cherry is turned into green coffee after harvest. The method used significantly affects the flavor profile of the final cup. What we call "coffee beans", are the seeds of the coffee fruit, referred to by the name of "Cherry".

4.1. Washed (Wet) Process

This method uses water to remove the fruit from the bean .

- **Process:** The cherries are pulped to remove the outer skin and pulp, then fermented in water to break down any remaining of the fruit. The beans are then washed to remove the mucilage layer and dried.
- **Flavor Profile:** Washed coffees are often described as clean, bright, and acidic, with more distinct and transparent flavor notes.

4.2. Natural (Dry) Process

This is the oldest and most traditional method, where the coffee cherry is dried whole.

- **Process:** The cherries are picked and laid out to dry in the sun, similar to drying a raisin. The bean ferments inside the cherry, absorbing its flavors. The dried outer layers are then mechanically removed.

- **Flavor Profile:** Natural coffees typically have a fuller body and are known for their fruity, sweet, and sometimes wine-like notes.

4.3. Honey (Pulped Natural) Process

This method is a hybrid of the washed and natural processes.

- **Process:** The cherry's outer skin and some pulp are removed, but a significant portion of the sticky mucilage (the "honey") is left on the bean to dry. The amount of mucilage left on the bean can be controlled, leading to different categories like "yellow honey," "red honey," and "black honey," which correspond to different levels of sweetness and fermentation.
- **Flavor Profile:** Honey-processed coffees offer a balance between the washed and natural methods, with a smoother, less acidic profile than washed coffees, and a cleaner sweetness than naturals.

***In addition to the traditional methods, a new wave of **experimental coffee processing** is gaining popularity. These innovative techniques are driven by a desire to create unique and complex flavor profiles. **Anaerobic processing**, for instance, involves fermenting the coffee cherries in sealed, oxygen-free tanks. This controlled environment extends the fermentation time and develops distinct, often intense, flavors. **Co-fermentation** takes this a step further by introducing other substances—such as fruits, spices, or even wine yeast—into the fermentation tank with the coffee cherries. This method directly infuses the beans with new aromas and tastes, resulting in coffees with wildly different and often unconventional flavor characteristics. Most of our premium coffees are processed using these new methods.

5. Cafe customers inquiring about discounts.

When a customer asks for a discount, the key is to be polite and confident, not apologetic. You're not just selling coffee; you're selling an experience built on quality and passion. Explain that at Cartel, we pour a lot of care into every single detail. Our coffees aren't just average coffee bags—they're in many cases rare and unique, we treat them as a luxury product. This policy allows us to maintain that high quality and ensure that every cup we serve lives up to our standards.

Think of it as a commitment to quality. Thank them for understanding, and let them know you're excited for them to enjoy their special coffee. The goal is to make them feel like they're part of a unique experience, not that they've been denied a simple request.

6. Empowering Your Team: How to Handle Questions You Don't Know

Our customers come to us for a premium coffee experience, and part of that experience is confident, knowledgeable service. Sometimes, a customer will ask a question you don't know the answer to—perhaps about a specific coffee's origin, a detailed flavor note, or a processing method like anaerobic or co-fermentation. When this happens, the worst thing you can do is avoid the question or, even worse, guess an answer. This can break the customer's trust and damage our reputation. Instead, we want to empower you to be a direct link to the experts.

Politely and confidently say something like, "That's a great question! Let me check with our barista, who is the expert on our coffee today." This shows the customer that we take their question seriously and that we have a team ready to provide an accurate, detailed response. It's not a sign of weakness; it's a display of our collective expertise. When you bring the question to the barista, you're not just getting an answer—you're reinforcing the idea that we have a deep passion for our product and a knowledgeable team dedicated to sharing it.

6.1 The Barista as an Expert Resource

On top of bringing a question to the barista for an answer, feel free to offer the customer the chance to chat with them directly! Many of our customers are passionate about coffee and would love to hear about our single-origin beans, unique flavor profiles, or experimental processing methods straight from the source. A simple "If you'd like to learn more, our barista would be happy to talk with you about it" is a great way to show that we're not just selling a product; we're inviting them into a conversation and sharing our expertise. This personal connection with a professional can elevate their entire experience and turn a simple visit into a memorable one.

Important for All Staff to remember:

- **Be Confident:** Your knowledge builds customer trust.
- **Listen Actively:** Understand the customer's preference.
- **Suggest & Guide:** Help customers explore new options.
- **Smile!** A friendly demeanor enhances the entire experience.