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What is the Difference Between Light, Medium, and Dark Roast Coffee?

One of the most frequently asked questions that we receive relates to the difference between coffee roasts. Everyone has their go-to roast level, and we are here to help you understand the differences between each of these levels. Our “roast levels” are used to describe how long and thoroughly we roast the coffee beans. The most common words to describe different levels of coffee roasting are Light, Medium, and Dark.

Coffee roasting is one of the most influential factors of coffee taste. Roasting transforms green beans into the aromatic and flavorful coffee that wakes our senses in the morning. However, roasting beans at different levels achieves more than merely darkening the bean; it also changes many of the beans' physical attributes as well.

Many large coffee companies roast in enclosed drums that can sometimes burn their beans. Our perforated drum roasters protect the smooth flavor and aroma of each roast level at a perfect temperature. Before we break down all of the roast levels, here are a few talking points to help you differentiate between roasting levels:

- Light roasts last until a single crack is heard, called the “first crack”
- As beans roast darker, both the caffeine content and origin flavors roast out
- Darker roasts are slightly less acidic and have the least caffeine
- Dark roasts get their bold, smoky flavor from oil that surfaces on the bean
- Light and Medium roasts have little to no oil on the surface of the bean
- As a bean roasts, the body gets thicker and heavier up until the “second crack”
- After the second crack, beans start to thin and taste more like charcoal



Hi. Need any help?

Light Roast

Light Roast coffees are characterized by their light brown color, lack of oil on the beans, and light body (or viscosity). These beans are allowed to reach a temperature of about 350°–410°. When roasting, beans typically pop at around 350°. This popping sound—known as the “first crack”—serves as the cue that the beans have reached a Light Roast.

A common misconception is that Light Roasts don't have as much caffeine as their darker, bolder counterparts. However, the truth is exactly the opposite! As beans roast, the caffeine slowly cooks out of the bean. Therefore, because lightly roasted beans cook for a shorter time and at a lower temperature, they retain more caffeine from the original green coffee bean. Other roasters refer to a Light Roast as Light City Roast, New England Roast, or Cinnamon Roast. Our most popular Light Roasts include **Bean Mean Up** and **Ethiopian**.

Medium Roast

Medium Roast coffees are brown and have a little thicker body than a Light Roast. Unlike Light, Medium starts to take on a bit of the taste from the roasting process, losing some of the bright floral flavors that are typical of a Light Roast. Instead, they carry much more of a balanced flavor with a medium amount of caffeine. A Medium is roasted until just before the second crack, usually at about 410°–440°. Other roasters refer to a Medium as American Roast, Breakfast Roast, or City Roast. Our most popular Medium Roasts include **Stargazer**, **Hawaiian Hazelnut**, **Southern Pecan**, **Papua New Guinea**, and **Costa Rican**.

Dark Roast

Dark Roast coffees are dark brown, even close to a blackened color. The beans are characterized by drawn-out oil that glosses the surface. Coffee made from a Dark Roast has a robust, full body. The flavors from the coffee's country of origin are almost entirely roasted out, taking on a very bold and smoky taste.

To be considered Dark, beans roast to a temperature of anything higher than 440° or essentially the end of the second crack. If beans roast much hotter than 465°, the coffee will start to taste more and more of charcoal. Many other big-batch roasters cut corners by roasting larger quantities faster at extremely high temperatures for a short amount of time, thus burning their beans and killing the flavor. At Copper Moon Coffee, we refuse to lower quality to boost quantity. We go to great lengths to make sure every single batch of coffee is perfectly roasted.

Purchasing a Dark Roast from other roasters can be confusing due to their numerous names. Some include French Roast, Italian Roast, New Orleans Roast, Continental Roast, or even Espresso Roast. At Copper Moon Coffee, we try to make the coffee purchasing experience as simple and straightforward as possible. We display our roast levels front-and-center on all packaging. And our most popular Dark Roasts include [Dark Sky](#), [Sulawesi](#), and [Sumatra](#).

Strong Roast

Copper Moon Coffee is always going above and beyond to “Reach for the Moon” with our roasts. One of our proprietary blends called [Blast Off](#) has an atypical roasting level. We like to call it our “[Strong Roast](#)” because our roast level, along with our proprietary blend of coffee, creates the maximum amount of caffeine from the beans without compromising on flavor.

We continually refine and improve our roasting process to guarantee perfect beans in every bag. We also actively manage our inventory to ensure that we deliver the freshest coffee possible. Consider this Copper Moon Coffee’s version of “Ground Control.”

We believe every earthling deserves the right roast for every occasion. Whether it’s a Strong Roast to “[Blast Off](#)” into your day, a bold cup of [Dark Sky](#) to help burn the midnight oil or a mellow Medium Roast like [Stargazer](#) while spending a night under the stars. We want you to enjoy a uniquely smooth and satisfying taste that’s truly [out of this world](#).

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